The Sum of Shared Memories

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/41740977.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	방탄소년단 | Bangtan Boys | BTS
Relationships:	Jeon Jungkook/Kim Taehyung | V, Jung Hoseok | J-Hope/Park Jimin
Characters:	Jeon Jungkook, Park Jimin (BTS), Jung Hoseok | J-Hope, Kim Taehyung | V, Min Yoongi | Suga, Kim Seokjin | Jin, Kim Namjoon | RM
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Hogwarts, Hogwarts BTS Fest, Hanahaki Disease, Jeon Jungkook Has Hanahaki Disease, Memory Loss, temporary memory loss, Enemies to Lovers, Angst, Heavy Angst, Angst with a Happy Ending, Hurt/Comfort, Choking, coughing up flowers, Blood, Pain, Physical and Emotional Pain, Miscommunication, Misunderstandings, Mystery, Pining, Alternate Universe - Harry Potter Setting, Post-Second Wizarding War with Voldemort (Harry Potter), Gryffindor Jeon Jungkook, Golden Maknae Jeon Jungkook, Slytherin Kim Taehyung | V, Side Jihope, Jung Hoseok | J-Hope is a Ray of Sunshine, Jung Hoseok | J-Hope is a Metamorphmagus, Jeon Jungkook & Park Jimin & Jung Hoseok | J-Hope are Best Friends, Jeon Jungkook & Kim Taehyung | V & Park Jimin are the Same Age, Kim Seokjin | Jin & Kim Taehyung | V are Siblings, And Namjoon is their cousin, Jeon Jungkook Needs a Hug, hell they all need a hug, I told my beta it wasn't that angsty and she laughed in my face, apparently my angst gauge is broken
Language:	English
Collections:	BTS Hogwarts Fest 2022
Stats:	Published: 2022-09-16 Words: 51,761 Chapters: 11/11

The Sum of Shared Memories

by going_slightly_mads (Saninha)

Summary

Sixth-year Gryffindor Jeon Jungkook is dying because of a Hanahaki curse. Now the simplest thing would be to go find the one he loves, confess, and hope his feelings are reciprocated. There's only a slight problem: Jungkook was Obliviated... and he doesn't remember who that person is.

Notes

The idea of a Hanahaki Taekook story has been plaguing me for a while, and so has the idea of a Taekook story set in Hogwarts. I'm glad I was able to combine the two!
A big thanks to my beta readers Meg and Reese!

Warning: there are graphic depictions of choking and coughing up blood in this fic. If this is something that makes you uncomfortable, please proceed with caution.

Can't believe I have to say this, but **DO NOT COPY TO ANOTHER SITE. JUST. DO NOT.**

- Translation into Français available: [Restricted Work] by Saninha

Obliviated

(MB by @Sowoozooaes)

Jungkook blinks.

He’s not entirely sure what he’s doing here, in his dormitory, sitting cross-legged on his canopy bed. The heavy, red velvet curtains are closed, it’s probably night-time. Was he studying? But there is no light in the room, no books open in front of him, no notes on the velvet bedspread—and besides, Jungkook prefers studying in the library.

He must have been sleeping, he reckons. He does feel like he’s emerging from a very long and very strange dream, the last remnants of which are disappearing into oblivion. There is a weird metallic taste in his mouth, stuck on his tongue. His eyes are puffy and his throat feels a little sore.

When he opens his curtains, he realises his roommates’ beds are empty, sheets neatly made. Jungkook feels disoriented. What time is it? He feels around for his wand, finding it

abandoned next to him on the bedspread.

"*Tempus,"* he mutters, but frowns when nothing happens. "*Tempus!*"

Some golden sparks fly at the end of his wand. Nothing more.

"What the hell," Jungkook whispers. "What's wrong with you?"

Confused, he gets up. He's dressed in his black school robes, his striped tie hanging loose around his neck, but he can't remember getting dressed this morning. He feels fuzzy about a lot of things; he needs to find Jimin.

A few students are lounging in the Gryffindor common room, chatting amicably or studying, and Jungkook supposes it must be the evening, even if he can't remember what he did today. Was he asleep the whole day? But then, why would he be dressed in his school uniform?

Spotting a fourth-year kid from the Quidditch team studying in a corner, he goes to him.

"Hey James, what time is it?"

The kid looks up.

"Um, around nine, I think? …Merlin, Jungkook, what happened to your wand??"

When Jungkook looks down, his heart jumps in his chest. His wand, his beloved wand, is split lengthwise, from top to bottom, an enormous crack in its red oak wood that reveals the three silver strands of unicorn hair braided inside.

Jungkook's eyes bulge out of their sockets. He raises the wand to take a better look at it; it's a miracle he even managed to get sparks out of it. What happened to it? He can't remember.

Fear starts to grip his heart. Something's wrong. Something's *wrong* —and he has no idea what. Everything feels strange, like he stepped into a mirror version of the world; the same everywhere, but inverted.

He tries to keep his voice steady. "Do you know where Jimin is?"

"Jimin?" The boy frowns. "He was at dinner, but he left right after. Maybe he's in the Hufflepuff common room?"

Jungkook nods, throat too tight to reply.

The Fat Lady grumbles when he steps through the hole, but he doesn't pay her any attention. The castle looks exactly like it usually does, but Jungkook can't shake the odd feeling that something is out of place. And why is his wand broken? Why can't he remember what he did today? Was he hit by a Memory Charm?

He rushes through the hallways, flying without stopping past students who wave at him to say hi, and doesn't stop until he's in front of the barrels leading to the Hufflepuff Basement, where Jimin's dormitory is located.

There's still a lot that he does remember, like the fact that he and Jimin have been best friends for the past six years, since even before their first day of school; Jimin's father, Hogwarts' Headmaster, came to Jungkook's house a month before his eleventh birthday to explain to him that he was a wizard, and that he was going to go to a wizarding school to practise charms and transfiguration and other exciting stuff. A few days later, he came back with his son Jimin, who was Jungkook's age and was going to Hogwarts for the first time too, and took them both to Diagon Alley, where he explained to Jungkook what he needed to buy, what for, and where to find it.

Jungkook didn't even understand the man was the school's Headmaster until he saw him welcome the students with a speech after their Sorting. But he was happy to know a kid his age in this strange, foreign world, and Jimin was happy too, and even if he was Sorted in a different house from Jungkook, they were still joined at the hip.

By now, everyone is used to seeing one of them in the other's vicinity, which is why no one bats an eyelid when Jungkook bursts into the Hufflepuff common room. Usually, he likes lounging here; the room is bright, with overhead circular windows, the chairs are comfortable, and the Hufflepuffs are a nice, welcoming bunch. But Jungkook doesn't pay any attention to the few students scattered here and there and makes a beeline for Jimin, who's sitting on a plush yellow sofa with his boyfriend Hoseok, who is currently in seventh year.

Upon seeing his friend hurtling towards him, Jimin startles. "Jungkook! What's happening? Is everything all right?"

Jungkook feels like crying, suddenly overwhelmed by the sight of his best friends' familiar faces. "Guys, something's wrong. Look at my wand!"

"Blimey," Jimin blinks, reaching up to take what is nothing more, now, than a mere wooden stick. "What happened to it?"

"I don't know, I can't remember. I can't even remember what I did today! Everything feels so strange, I'm freaking out right now."

"Whoa, whoa, calm down, Jungkook. What's happening exactly? Tell us. You're not making any sense." Hoseok stands up and squeezes his shoulder, while his hair goes from pink to a reassuring golden brown. Jungkook always envied his metamorphmagus abilities. Today, he doesn't even notice.

He tries to inhale slowly. "I think I've been hit by a spell. I woke up on my bed without knowing how I got there, and my memory is all fuzzy and blurred. When was the last time you saw me?"

Jimin and Hoseok stare at him, nonplussed.

"Well," Jimin says slowly, "you and I were in DADA together earlier. Then you went to your Potions class, and I went to Arithmancy."

Now that Jimin is talking about it, Jungkook does remember sitting in the DADA classroom next to him, scribbling notes and practising defensive spells—although it's all blurry, like it

happened a hundred years ago. His wand was fine at the time. He can't remember the next class, though. It's strange. More than strange; it's scary, like he's not in control of his own life. His own brain. There are holes in the floor of his mind.

Jimin, eyes fixed on him, continues. "I didn't see you afterwards. You weren't at dinner, but I didn't think much of it. I thought you went to the kitchens to ask the house-elves for soup or something."

Jungkook raises an eyebrow. "Soup?" Why would he ask for soup? He doesn't even *like* soup. Compared to what the house-elves normally prepare for dinner, soup sounds like a punishment he certainly wouldn't inflict on himself.

"Well, yeah. You usually do."

"I… usually ask for soup?"

Jungkook is completely lost, and a wave of cold panic starts to run through his veins, lighting little sparks in his fingertips. Maybe he was hit by a spell that sent him to another dimension, a parallel world where he *does* like soup. Maybe he's taken the place of some other Jungkook, a bloke who looks exactly like him, black hair, sixth-year Gryffindor, star Chaser of the Quidditch team.

Who likes soup.

Jimin frowns. "Yeah. It's easier to swallow, with your throat. At least, that's what you usually say."

Jungkook's fingers fly to his throat and touch it gently. "What's wrong with my throat?"

This time, both Jimin and Hoseok look gobsmacked, before a flash of understanding crosses Hoseok's eyes. His hair turns bright purple—a colour Jungkook knows he associates with shock.

"Oh, Merlin's balls," he breathes. "You didn't. Please, please tell me you didn't."

With a flick of his wand, he casts a *Muffliato*, like he always does when he doesn't want people to overhear them, and Jungkook feels a new flash of fear shooting through his veins.

"I didn't what?"

Jimin stands up too, mouth agape. "Oh no. No, no, no. You, you *bloody idiot* ."

"What is it?" Jungkook barks. "Stop speaking in riddles! I don't understand a word of what you're saying!"

"You did," Jimin breathes. "You *utter* moron. You obliviated yourself."

Jungkook freezes, stunned.

He… *what?*

After a long, pregnant pause, he shakes his head. “I obliviated myself? You’re joking. Why would I do that?”

“Oh, Kookie,” Jimin sighs. Jungkook hates the look of pity he can read clearly in his and Hoseok’s eyes. “You really don’t remember. Come here.”

Gently, Jimin takes his arm, forcing him to sit on the black and yellow sofa, and settles right next to him. His expression is grave, and Jungkook suddenly isn’t sure he wants to hear what Jimin will tell him. It can’t be good.

Hoseok sits on his other side and puts a comforting hand on his knee. “It must be, given what happened to your wand. They’re very loyal, you know, wands. They don’t like turning against their owner. Yours probably couldn’t handle the distress of having to perform a Memory Charm on you, and it split.”

“Alright, but *why* would I obliviate myself?”

“Because of your curse,” Jimin sighs. “Because you’re dying.”

☆☆☆

Jungkook’s ears are ringing. All blood has left his face. His fingertips are cold.

“D-dying?” he whispers.

Why would he be dying? He’s young, he’s strong, he’s in the prime of his life. It doesn’t make any sense. (Then again, in the wizarding world, things don’t always need to make sense. After six years, he still has trouble adjusting to it, sometimes.)

“The Hanahaki curse,” Hoseok replies in a sombre tone. “You were hit.”

“Ha… Hanahaki?”

“It’s an awful, dark magic curse,” Jimin says, eyebrows knitted. “If you aren’t in love, it doesn’t do anything special. But if you *are* in love, the curse makes you throw up flowers for as long as your feelings aren’t reciprocated.”

“We don’t know who hit you,” Hoseok adds, “and we don’t know why either. Maybe someone who was jealous of you?”

Jungkook stares at them, dumbfounded. He was… throwing up flowers? That’s why his throat feels sore and tastes like blood? Because he threw up *flowers?* He shakes his head. *Magic.*

“There isn’t any known counter-curse,” Jimin says. “The flowers grow in your lungs, the stems wrap around your heart and squeeze. It’s guaranteed death if you let it develop. I can’t

believe you don't remember!"

"I can't believe you obliviated yourself," Hoseok adds, a white strand streaking his purple hair. "I mean, I *can* believe it, because your life was on the line, and we talked about it over and over, but… that you'd do it without telling us or letting us help… what were you thinking?"

Jimin nods adamantly. "We've been in this together from the beginning. We did all the research, we looked for solutions. You should have called us!"

Jungkook is still listening, but it's like they're talking about someone else. His mind can't comprehend it. He was dying. He still is, maybe.

"When was I hit by this curse? Explain everything to me. Don't leave anything out."

"We don't know when you were hit," Hoseok replies. "One day, about a month ago, you told us there was something wrong with you and that you were throwing up petals. We thought it was an innocent jinx… we laughed about it. But it kept going, and the petals came out stained with blood. You started to hurt."

"So we went to the library and we did some research," Jimin continues. "Took some time. But Hoseok finally found out that it's an ancient dark curse named Hanahaki. It means "vomit flowers" in Japanese. It does exactly what the name advertises: make a person in love vomit flowers until they confess their feelings—or until their beloved loves them back, we're not sure. It's a fairly rare curse and we couldn't dig much info about it. There was only one book that even mentioned it. We didn't return it, I'll give it to you so you can reread it."

Jungkook nods, listening intently. Now that they're actually explaining, he feels calmer, but it must be because he's in shock.

Because he's dying.

Funny how repeating it in his head doesn't make it sound any more real.

"Right. I was hit by a deadly love curse with no known counter-curse. What happened after? Did I confess my love to… whoever I was… am… was… in love with?" He can't decide. Is it possible to love someone you don't remember? Because he sure as hell can't think of anyone he would fancy. "Did I tell a professor? The Headmaster? Did I go to St Mungo's?"

Jimin shakes his head. "You always refused to tell us who you were in love with. You just told us confessing was not on the cards, not to mention reciprocation. We don't know why."

"Right," Jungkook says slowly. "What else?"

"You didn't want to tell anyone else besides us," Hoseok adds. "To protect yourself, I reckon. There's a procedure, see, to avoid death. A very complicated surgical spell performed by healers that removes the flowers from your body."

At that, Jungkook lightens up considerably. "Brilliant! So there *is* a solution! Why didn't you guys mention it earlier? When can I have this procedure?" His voice dies in his painful throat

when he sees his friends' dark expressions. "It's not that easy, is it?"

"Definitely not," Jimin sighs. "The procedure has only a seventy per cent chance of success, *and* it removes your ability to ever feel love again. Romantic *or* platonic, like… you'd stop loving us too. Essentially… you wouldn't die, but you'd become a—what do you call it? A robot? Or a psychopath. You didn't want the procedure."

Jungkook blinks. "Yes. Shocking. Well. This *is* a shite curse, isn't it?"

"Yup. Worst part is, sometimes they don't even let you choose, they force you to remove the flowers." Jimin frowns. "I don't know if that part is still true, but it was written in the book we found. You didn't want to risk losing your feelings by telling a professor. I told you to tell my father, he would never have forced you to get the procedure and he would have done anything to find the person who cursed you, but you wouldn't hear about it. You said the situation was so serious he would have to tell the school board and then it would be out of his hands and out of yours."

Jungkook's memory is fuzzy, but he doesn't think he remembers ever experiencing something as strange as this; hearing his friends talking about his imminent death and feeling like it's happening to someone else. Death usually does, until it comes for you.

He gnaws at his lower lip. "So, I had to choose between death or emotional wasteland, right, and, clever as I am, I thought that if I forgot who I fancied, the disease might shrink. Is that what I thought?"

"It was a possibility," Hoseok nods. "The book mentioned it, said it had been proved an effective alternative treatment, most of the time in the earliest stages of the disease. We told you we would perform it on you if you asked us. You didn't want to, at first. Probably because you didn't want to forget the person you loved… But after a while, you said it was the best option and that it was stupid not to try, even if you weren't sure what stage you were at."

"To which I replied the most stupid thing was to *not* confess your love," Jimin adds, "but you told us that it wouldn't work anyway. You sounded sure."

What a mess, Jungkook thinks. What a (quite literal) bloody mess.

"When did we decide to do it?"

"When it became hard for you to even eat something, it was like a week ago. You asked for a bit more time. Maybe something happened today that made you change your mind. But you should have asked us, Jungkook!"

Jungkook rubs his face in his hands. It's too much, too big and heavy to understand.

"Will it work?" he asks, his voice muffled. "The Memory Charm. I won't die?"

"There's simply no way to be sure," Hoseok replies, tone grave. "We'll see."

"What if it doesn't?"

He doesn’t even have to look up to get his answer; their silence is eloquent.

I don’t want to die, he thinks desperately. *Please, don’t let the flowers grow anymore. I don’t want to die.*

At the edge of consciousness

The good thing is that Jungkook's brain won't believe that he's dying. Since the spell, he hasn't vomited flowers, and it still feels like something that has happened to someone else, so he's not too depressed about that.

On the other hand, there's a *lot* he forgot, he realises the next morning. Some of it doesn't make any sense, and he needs to keep Jimin next to him at all times to help him. His mind needs a crutch.

They're heading to the Great Hall for breakfast, but upon entering the room, Jungkook stops. Jimin turns to him, looking worried.

"What's wrong?"

"Why are there four tables?" Something floats in Jungkook's mind, at the edge of his consciousness, something that he thinks he should know but can't remember. Chose to forget.

Jimin stares at him, brow furrowed. "What do you mean?"

"I mean…" He's not quite sure what he means, is the thing. His thoughts are blurry. "There's only… three, right? One for each House." As the words leave his mouth, he knows they don't feel right, but he's unable to say why. "Gryffindor, my House. Hufflepuff, your House… And Ravenclaw…" He's on the verge of saying a name, associated with the House, but draws a blank. Another thread linked to nothing. He shakes his head to clear the fog away. "What's the fourth one?"

Jimin gapes at him, eyes wide. "Jungkook… Did you forget Slytherin?"

Slytherin. It feels both familiar and foreign.

"What's Slytherin?"

They're still standing on the threshold; when Jungkook asks the question, three students passing them by, their ties displaying Ravenclaw's royal blue et bronze colours, overhear him and shoot him a look of stupefaction. Jungkook feels like an idiot.

Jimin, alarmed, grips his arm. "It's always been four Houses, Jungkook. From the very beginning. Since the creation of Hogwarts. How could you forget that?"

A loud voice behind them interrupts them. "Forget what?"

Jungkook and Jimin both turn toward its owner. He's an older-looking bloke with black hair slicked back, dressed in standard robes, but his tie is plain white, adorned with the school's crest.

Jungkook immediately notices how incredibly fit he is, which consequently makes him think that he's probably gay. When the shock of discovering his sexuality doesn't come, he realises that he probably must have known all along, but the Memory charm made him forget. Like so many other important things.

God, his past self should have listened to Jimin and Hoseok, instead of obliviating himself and doing a terribly botched job at it.

"Nothing." Jimin offers a tense smile to the boy—whoever he is, Jungkook thinks, he certainly doesn't know about his *condition.*

"Alright, Jungkookie?" the boy asks. "You don't look so good."

"I'm… I'm good." Jungkook bites his lips. Bugger. Judging by the nickname, he obviously knows him well—and forgot him.

Instead of letting it go, the student frowns. "You sure? You know you can tell me anything, yeah?"

Jungkook swallows. "Yes, thank you."

Looking deeply suspicious, the boy glances at Jimin, who shrugs amicably, then walks away and goes to sit at the Gryffindor table. As soon as he's out of earshot, Jungkook turns to Jimin. "Who's that?"

Jimin chokes on air. It takes a good five minutes and apologetic pats on the back from Jungkook before he's able to say something. "Jungkook, that's Seokjin. Did you forget him?"

"Seokjin?"

"Yes! Kim Seokjin! He's one of the students doing an apprenticeship here at Hogwarts. Did you forget that too?"

Now that he thinks about it, he notices that he hasn't. It explains the white tie; a colourless section for the apprentices, training to become Masters in their disciplines under the guidance of Hogwarts teachers. This, he remembers.

"No," Jungkook replies in a low voice. "I just forgot him." When he sees Jimin looking at him with wide eyes, he adds: "I *know.* I should have called you, I know I shouldn't have done it myself. The spell was probably too strong. I'd say I'm sorry, but I don't remember what I thought at the time. It *is* done, though, so do you want to keep shaking your head at me or do you want to help me gain some of my memories back?"

He doesn't mean to be so snappy, but his throat still hurts, even if he hasn't coughed up new petals yet, and he's forgotten a large chunk of his life and, oh yeah, he's potentially dying.

It's no reason to take it out on Jimin, though, sweet Jimin who's never done anything but help him when he needed it, during all these years, kind Jimin who's probably as worried as he is about his prospective fate.

“I’m sorry,” he adds immediately, remorse bubbling in his chest. “I’m freaking out.”

“I know,” Jimin replies in a soft tone, putting his hand on Jungkook’s arm. “I get it. I’m just shocked at the number of things you forgot. I mean, *Slytherin.* And *Seokjin.*”

“Who’s Seokjin, then?”

“He was a student in Gryffindor, before. In third year when we were first-years. He’s like a big brother to you,” Jimin explains while he tugs him towards the Hufflepuff table. “And to me, too. After his seventh year, he decided to stay at Hogwarts to undertake a two-year Transfiguration apprenticeship. He’s overprotective, though, so I reckon the real reason he stayed here is to keep an eye on all of us.”

“Shit,” Jungkook sighs, sitting down next to Jimin. “He sounds like a good friend. Why did I forget him?”

“Probably because he’s linked to the person you were in love with, in some capacity,” Jimin replies. “You must have oriented your spell to forget everything regarding that person, but your wand exploded, your spell damaged your brain, and you forgot more than you meant to.”

“What am I supposed to do? Should I reverse the memory charm?”

“Is it even possible?”

“It is,” Hoseok interrupts, sitting opposite them, on the other side of the long table, and making them jump. Today, his hair is a beautiful grey-blue and he’s got cute freckles. He doesn’t wait a second to grab a toast, covering it with marmalade, then continues speaking with his mouth full. Jimin looks both charmed and disgusted. “It’s tricky, but possible. The memories aren’t *erased*—they’re just hidden away in the brain. But you’re the only one who can do it. Memory charms can only be reverted by the person who cast the spell, or under torture.” He swallows his toast and frowns. “Don’t count on us to do *that.*”

“Anyway, it’s working for now, isn’t it?” Jimin says, jerking his chin towards Jungkook. “You’re not coughing up flowers anymore, which was the whole point.”

“And I couldn’t reverse the spell even if I wanted to,” Jungkook adds, waving his now useless wand. “I must get a new one. I need to write a letter to my parents to ask for money. Then I’ll have to go to Gringotts to change it into wizarding currency. And then, Ollivander’s. It’s going to take weeks.”

“You should tell my father,” Jimin says softly. “The teachers will want to know why you can’t perform magic during lessons anyway.”

“And they’ll want to know why your wand broke, too,” Hoseok points out. “What will you tell them? It’s not like you can say you sat on it and it snapped in half. It’s broken in a very distinctive way.”

“I don’t know. I can’t tell the truth, can I?”

“You can tell part of the truth,” Jimin says. “You can say you cast a memory charm on yourself because there was something you wanted to forget. Your wand didn’t react well. When they’ll ask what it was, you’ll just have to say that you don’t remember. Since, you know… you wanted to forget.”

“You’ll sound like an idiot, but it might work,” Hoseok nods.

Jungkook sighs. “Great. So, what is Slytherin?”

☆☆☆

After breakfast, and after Jimin explained to him at length what Slytherin is (and from what he said, Jungkook thinks he wouldn’t have minded being kept in ignorance after all, because the Slytherin students sound like twats, the lot of them), they both head to the Headmaster’s office, so Jungkook can warn him about the little incident with his wand.

On the way there, he bumps into a student, with such violence that the boy’s bag flies away and crashes on the floor, spewing notes, quills, and ink bottles.

“Bloody hell,” Jungkook mutters before kneeling on the floor and gathering the fallen items. “Alright, mate? Sorry, wasn’t looking.”

The student doesn’t even move; he just watches him put everything back in the bag. When Jungkook hands it to him, he doesn’t make a move to take it. He looks shocked. His tie is green, so he’s one of the many people Jungkook unfortunately forgot—the question is, did they know each other? Unsure, Jungkook gives him a smile, which is probably the wrong thing to do, given the way the boy’s eyes widen.

(He’s beautiful, now that Jungkook pays attention, a bit like Seokjin in the Great Hall—and he smells good, too. He must have put on some perfume, and what is it with Jungkook that he can’t help noticing things like that? Stupid hormones.)

The student glances at Jimin. “What’s wrong with him?” he asks in a cold voice, jerking his chin towards Jungkook.

“Nothing that concerns you, Kim,” Jimin replies in a steely tone Jungkook didn’t even know he possessed. “Walk away.”

Oh. Not a friend, then.

The boy looks at them both for a moment more, then shrugs and turns away, bag on his shoulder. Jungkook watches him go, before Jimin tugs on his wrist.

“C’mon, let’s go. We need to catch Dad before the class starts.”

“Who was that?” Jungkook asks, letting Jimin drag him through the hallways.

“What, you forgot him too? Well, it makes sense that you’d help him, then. That’s Kim Taehyung. He’s in sixth year, like us. Slytherin. He’s been picking on us since our first day, making our lives a literal hell.”

“Why?” Jungkook watches Jimin, curious.

“Because my dad’s the Headmaster and you’re muggle-born, and because he’s a massive tosser.”

Jungkook blinks. “Seriously? He hates me because I’m a muggle-born?”

“He’s probably jealous. Everyone loves you, you’re the star of the Gryffindor Quidditch team, you’re the best student in our year, and you’re a muggle-born. His pureblood arse can’t stand being beaten by someone he considers inferior.”

“Wow.”

Suddenly, he regrets ever thinking the guy was beautiful.

“That’s Seokjin’s little brother, by the way,” Jimin adds.

“Seokjin? The guy from before? My adopted big brother? Wait, does that mean I’m stepbrothers with this twat?”

A smile plays at the corner of Jimin’s mouth. “Of sorts, yeah. Their father is Professor Kim, the Astronomy teacher. Remember him?”

Jungkook shakes his head.

“Lucky you. He’s a gigantic cunt,” Jimin says with such vehemence that Jungkook has to stifle a giggle. “He always hated us, but particularly you. Word on the hallways is that he’s a former Voldemort sympathiser, but he was never charged after the war because he wasn’t an official Death-Eater. Dad says it’s a load of bollocks, but then he trusts people too much. He was a Hufflepuff too, see.”

“I see,” Jungkook chuckles. “How come we don’t like the father and the son but we like Seokjin, then?”

“That’s the beauty of it. Seokjin had a falling out with his family. They’re all Slytherin through and through, so they were very cross when he got into Gryffindor at first. Seokjin told them they were a bunch of fucking racists and pureblood supremacists and he didn’t want to have anything to do with them anymore. He’s been living with his cousin Namjoon ever since. But then, his little brother came to Hogwarts, same year as us. They didn’t get along at first, but around our third year, they got closer, and Kim stopped picking on us so much—although he still was an obnoxious arsehole, mind. Seokjin might have said something to him. He still thinks we’re vermin, but at least, he doesn’t jinx us or insult us to our faces anymore. It’s more like a cold war, between us.”

Jungkook shakes his head. “I can’t believe I forgot all that.”

“Forgetting Kim Taehyung is not a great loss,” Jimin declares in a final tone, before stopping in front of the gargoyle statue that leads to the Headmaster’s office. “There we are. Want me to go with you?”

Jungkook thinks about it, then shakes his head. “No, it’s okay. I’ll go alone. You’ll be late for your class.”

At least, he remembers Jimin’s father, the Headmaster; he’s been invited to their house in Cornwall every summer since his first year. Jimin’s dad is like a second father to him. He’s a good man, kind and sweet, a true Hufflepuff. Jungkook knows he would have done anything for him if he’d told him he was under the Hanahaki curse, but he also would have felt compelled to do the Right Thing, and tell either the matron or the school board, neither of which would have ended well for Jungkook—at least, according to his past self with all his memories.

“Alright,” Jimin smiles. “I’ll open the passage. *Loyalty over royalty!*”

“That’s a… very Hufflepuff password,” Jungkook comments when the statue starts moving.

Jimin shrugs. “That’s Dad for you. Go on.”

The gargoyle is pivoting, revealing a circular stone staircase. Jungkook climbs on the moving steps and lets the staircase lift him, while Jimin disappears out of sight, until he reaches a small entrance with a wooden door and knocks.

“Come in!” a voice hollers from within the office.

Jungkook pushes the door open. He’s been a few times in the Headmaster’s office in the course of his six school years, but it’s always a delight for him to step into the wide circular room and look at the strange magical objects; as a muggle-born who still keeps learning every day about magic, he rarely knows what their use is, but it’s always an unlimited source of fascination.

“Jungkook!” The Headmaster looks surprised. He’s the spitting image of Jimin, only twenty years older and twenty centimetres taller. When he sees Jungkook, he stands up from his chair behind his desk. “What brings you here, my boy? Come in, come in!”

“Hello, Headmaster. I’m sorry to disturb you.” Jungkook crosses the room and climbs the few steps that lead to the desk. “I wanted to tell you that my wand is broken and that I’ll need to buy a new one. I won’t be able to practise during lessons. Maybe you should warn the teachers.”

He holds out his wand and Jimin’s father takes it, frowning.

“What happened to it?” he asks with a concerned look on his face.

“I…”

Suddenly, Jungkook decides not to tell him he cast a Memory charm on himself. He doesn’t want to look like an idiot, and he doesn’t want the school to know.

“I put it too close to the fireplace in the common room,” he makes up on the spot. “It got too hot and it cracked.”

Jimin’s father stares at him, looking deeply suspicious, and Jungkook hopes to Merlin he’s not too skilled at legilimency. Merlin knows he’s unable to close his mind.

“You put it too close to the fireplace,” the Headmaster parrots, sounding unimpressed. “Really.”

Jungkook shrugs. “I was studying, I didn’t notice… I heard a crack, but it was too late.” He hopes it’s not too obvious he’s lying through his teeth. He’s never been a good liar.

Jimin’s father knows him well, though; he was Jungkook’s first link to the magical world, and he saw him grow up, year after year, to the point he probably knows him better than his parents do.

So maybe he knows that Jungkook isn’t telling the truth; but he’s also the kind of man who doesn’t believe in making kids do what they don’t want to do, which is why, luckily, he doesn’t press.

“Very well,” he finally says. “Will you be able to procure a new one?”

“There’s no way to fix this one, is there? With a *Reparo* or something?” The idea of letting go of his wand, his second friend in the magical world after Jimin, tugs at his heartstrings.

“Unfortunately, no,” the Headmaster shakes his head. “The wand isn’t just broken, see, it’s *injured.* You could repair it physically, but it still wouldn’t be able to cast spells.”

Jungkook lowers his head. “Figures. I need to write a letter to my parents to get some money, and then I’ll need to go to Diagon Alley.”

“Alright. Let me know when you get the money, yes? Then I’ll take you to Diagon Alley.”

“You will? Thank you so much!”

“I’d lend you some money right now,” Jimin’s father smiles, “but I don’t want to be accused of favouritism. Wish I had a spare wand to give you, but unfortunately, I don’t.”

“It’s okay. I’ll make do. I suppose Jimin will let me borrow his wand when I need it.”

The Headmaster nods. Then, when Jungkook thanks him once more and turns to leave, he says: “Jungkook? Do let me know if you’re having problems, yes?”

Jungkook blinks. His heart sinks a bit, but he’s careful not to let it show on his face, and gives him a weak smile instead.

“Yes, Headmaster.”

☆☆☆

Jimin is waiting for him when the moving staircase brings him back down, contrary to what he expected.

“What are you still doing here? You’re going to be late.”

Jimin shrugs. “I wanted to make sure you still remembered your timetable. We’ve got Charms this morning, then Transfiguration. And this afternoon, you’ve got double-Potions. You’ll be on your own then. Can’t imagine why you chose to continue *that* subject.”

Jungkook hesitates. “I, uh… can’t remember either, to be honest… What’s Potions? Is it what it sounds like? A class where we brew magical potions?”

“You… You forgot *Potions?*”

“’Fraid so,” Jungkook shrugs.

“This is so weird,” Jimin whispers, staring at him. “I mean, you forgot *Slytherin* too, but still… Don’t you remember the five years that we’ve spent botching recipes and cutting our fingers instead of valerian roots? Don’t you remember that time Arnold Briggs threw a banger in your cauldron and it exploded and even the *floor* melted and there was a hole in the ground for a week before they patched it up?

“I remember that!” Jungkook exclaims happily. “So that was during a Potions lesson! Ok, ok. This memory thing is really weird. I remember that day, I just can’t associate it with a class. It’s a bit like we were brewing potions for fun.”

“I’d never brew potions for fun,” Jimin shivers. “Only you would be mental enough to do that. Alright, let’s go or we’ll be late to Charms.”

The professors know what’s happening with Jungkook’s wand even before he steps inside the classrooms; the Headmaster probably warned them as soon as Jungkook left his office. Of course, Jimin graciously lends him his wand, but it’s very different from his own, and he doesn’t feel it. The spells he casts are so weak it’s laughable (although Jungkook doesn’t laugh at all). It’s like he lost not just his wand, but his hand.

“You’ll get a new one,” Jimin tells him when they head towards the Great Hall for lunch.

“Yes, which is why I need to write to my parents right now.”

People whisper when he passes them by to sit at the Gryffindor table with Jimin. The tale of his broken wand is already spreading; since Jungkook is very popular in the school, several students come to him and ask him if everything is all right and how he broke it. He tells them the same lie he told the Headmaster, and they look just as suspicious as the Headmaster did, but they don’t insist. Jimin rolls his eyes when he hears it, looking like he’s thinking, *of all the excuses you could find, you went for* this one*??* But luckily, he doesn’t press either.

"*Dear Mum, dear Dad. I hope you're OK. Would you please give me some money so I can buy a new wand? I broke mine performing a stupid spell that messed with my brain,"* Jungkook says in a low voice. "This is going to fly so well."

"Maybe with a bit more diplomacy," Jimin suggests with a smile. "And the curse messed with your brain, not the spell. I mean, the spell too. But you didn't have many options."

"Glad to hear you finally say it." Jungkook takes his quill and starts writing. "You know, it's a shame that you wizards don't have the Internet or smartphones. I could call them, they'd send me the money on PayPal, and poof! No need to wait weeks before they receive the letter, and then some more weeks before they reply. That's *real* magic right there."

"Yeah, yeah, you've said that every day for the past six years. Muggles use a different kind of magic, I get it. And don't say *you wizards.* You're a wizard too."

"I like to think I'm the best of both worlds."

Jimin stares at him; there's a strange look in his eyes that makes Jungkook frown.

"What?"

"Er, nothing. It's just… it's weird to see you joking again. Before you…" He looks around him to make sure no one is listening and continues in a soft voice. "Before you obliviated yourself, you were sad all the time. Well, you were dying of unreciprocated love, so I guess you had a reason, but, even before the curse… you've been sad for a long time."

Chin tucked on his palm, Jungkook looks at him, interested. "How long?"

"I'm not sure. This winter, maybe. It was subtle, so I didn't notice right away… but you stopped joking. I thought something was stressing you out, even though we don't have important exams this year. And then you got the disease… So, it might not have been such a bad thing, you know, the memory charm. I mean, you forgot *Slytherin*..."

"You're never going to let me live that down, will you?"

"*Never*. So, you forgot Slytherin, but you remember the things that count. You don't cough up flowers anymore. You're joking again. It's like the old Jungkook came back, and I… I'm really happy about that."

Jungkook can't help but give him a soft smile. "I'm happy too. I'm happy to be happy."

Unfortunately, because life was never that easy, he doesn't stay happy very long.

☆☆☆

After a quick detour to the owlery to send his parents the letter, Jungkook has Potions. He needs Jimin to guide him to the dungeons, because he's forgotten where the class takes place; only when he's in front of the door, peering into the room, does he remember having already been there.

Jimin pats his shoulder. "Good luck. Although I'm not sure how much brewing you'll be able to do without your wand."

"Brewing isn't about wands, Mr Park." The Potions teacher, Professor Dillingus, steps out of the room. He's the one who took the job after old Professor Slughorn retired; Jungkook quite likes him, he remembers. "It's about magical intent. Wizards are magical beings. Muggles could wave wands and never get anything out of it; wizards could cut slices of bread and use them to create a potion. Besides, lots of wizards in Africa or Asia don't need wands; they learn to practice wandless magic from their youngest age. This is the perfect opportunity for you to practice your wandless spells, Mr Jeon."

Jungkook struggles to hide a smile. "I'm not sure I'm quite that talented a wizard, Professor."

"Nonsense! You're the most talented muggle-born wizard Hogwarts has seen since our esteemed Minister for Magic herself was studying here. And I should know, I was there."

This, Jungkook remembers; he learned it all during his school years. Hermione Granger-Weasley, the youngest Minister for Magic in centuries, played a major part in a war that ended when Jungkook was but a few months old, along with her mates Harry Potter and Ron Weasley. When Jungkook first came to Hogwarts, feeling unsure of himself because both his parents were muggles and he had so many new things to learn about, as soon as Jimin told him about her, she became the role model that he so desperately needed to overcome his inferiority complex.

He can't help but blush, but he's also fabulously interested. "Did you know her, Sir?"

"Oh, yes, yes," Professor Dillingus says in his usual lackadaisical tone. "I was a few years older, see, but I had the honour of living at Hogwarts while she was a student too, and sharing the same house. Although at the time, it didn't feel like such an honour, what with the sheer number of points the three of them made us lose… but they always gained them back, of course. Ah, Mr Kim, come in, come in. Well, unless you want to hold Mr Jeon's hand while he crushes his beetle eyes, Mr Park, I will take it from here."

Kim Taehyung, the beautiful guy Jungkook bumped into in a hallway, snickers while making his way into the room, bag on his shoulder as usual. Red as a beet from being humiliated in front of his enemy, Jimin stammers, "S… See you in the Great Hall, Jungkook!" before fleeing the scene.

Grinning, Jungkook enters the room too, then realises he doesn't know where to sit. He's forgotten that too. There aren't many people in the classroom, ten at most; this is an advanced class for those seeking to take their Potions N.E.W.T.s. The students with red, yellow, and blue ties, he recognises; but he's forgotten about the green-ties ones. There are two of them, aside from the infamous Kim Taehyung. One of the Slytherins smiles at him, so Jungkook offers him an uneasy smile in return.

He shouldn't have. Immediately, the student waves.

"Hey, Jungkook! Come on, let's pair up!"

Suddenly, it feels like all eyes turn to him, and Jungkook has no idea what to do. Aren't Slytherins the enemy? Put on the spot, he can only shrug. "Sure."

"Yes, yes, partner up, kids," Professor Dillingus says while Jungkook sits next to the Slytherin. "Today, we'll be brewing a complicated potion that will require two great minds working on it instead of one. Veritaserum! You've all heard of that one. Three drops in your pumpkin juice, and you'd be telling us all of your darkest secrets."

A shiver runs through the class. The boy next to Jungkook grimaces.

"A very complicated potion to brew," the professor continues, "but I have faith in you. The instructions are written on the blackboard. The ingredients you need are on the shelves at the back of the room. The potion has to mature for a full lunar phase, so you won't get to finish it today, but let's see what you can do in two hours. Go on and impress me."

"I'll… I'll write the list and go get the ingredients," Jungkook mumbles.

"Ok, I'll prepare the fire and the base!" the student he's paired up with replies happily, grabbing his cauldron.

List in hand, Jungkook heads towards the shelves at the back, feeling like an imposter. He can't ask the boy his name, can he? They've been in the same class for six years; he's supposed to know it by now. Man, how he wishes Jimin were here with him.

A bit nervous, he searches the shelves for the ingredients he needs, when someone appears next to him. Another green tie. A whiff of perfume.

"What happened to your wand?" Kim Taehyung says in a low voice.

Jungkook is surprised; Jimin told him Kim Taehyung only ever spoke to them to insult or jinx them, but there he is, making conversation.

"Put-it-too-close-to-the-fireplace-and-it-cracked," he recites, an excuse he knows by heart by now. "Say, what's the name of the boy I'm partnered with again?"

It's his only choice if he wants to know; but Kim Taehyung looks at him, frowning.

"You mean, Jordan Appleton? What, you forgot?"

"Ah yes, Jordan!" Jungkook exclaims as if the name means anything to him—it doesn't. "I was drawing a blank here. Well, I've got all I need. Thanks, Kim."

Unfortunately, Kim doesn't let him leave; instead, he grabs his wrist.

"What's the matter with you? Seriously. You're acting weird."

Jungkook wonders how he knows. Then again, they've been sharing classes for six years; he's bound to know him a bit, even if they aren't in the same House.

"Nothing's wrong with me." Jungkook gives him a bright smile to get him off his case. It only makes Kim look even more suspicious. "I'm fine. Can you let go of me? I've got a potion to brew."

Finally, Kim lets him leave, but Jungkook can feel his gaze burning a hole through his back while he returns to his seat. He lets out a deep sigh. How long will he be able to keep this up?

"Are you alright, Jungkook?" Jordan Appleton asks, looking concerned. "You look tired."

"Yeah, I'm alright. Ok! Let's brew this potion."

The good thing about it is that Professor Dillingus was right; Jungkook doesn't need his wand to make it work. Magical intent, was what the man said, and he focuses every bit of his magic on cutting, slicing, and crushing the ingredients. Brewing a potion is a bit like cooking, or maybe more like baking, and Jungkook likes doing both when he comes home for the summer holidays. With a long wooden spoon, he stirs the transparent liquid anticlockwise. All in all, it goes rather well, if he excepts the few times he looks up to see Kim Taehyung on the other side of the aisle, who's supposed to be working on his own potion, but instead seems to study him with a frown.

But the trickiest part is yet to come.

"Add 1,79 ounces of powdered daffodils," Jungkook reads in a low voice so as not to disturb his classmates. "The water's temperature must be no lower than 82,4°c and no higher than 82,9°c. If the powdered daffodils are added too slowly, the water will evaporate; if they are added too quickly, the potion will swell up and overflow. Separate the 1,79 ounces into three tea saucers with the exact same amount of powder on it, down to the grain. The saucers must be evenly poured into the cauldron at the speed of 5,5 seconds each. After each saucer has been poured, stir three and a half times anticlockwise, then one and a half time clockwise. Shall the process be successful, the potion will become crimson red for a few seconds before going back to transparent."

"Easy-peasy," Appleton smiles.

"Be my guest, then," Jungkook says, presenting him with the daffodil powder.

"Oh no, no, you're way better than me at this. I've got shaky hands; I'll mess it up. You do it, Jungkook."

Jungkook sighs, but his hands are steady; after making sure the saucers are carrying the same amount of powder, he raises the first one over the cauldron and slowly (but not *too* slowly) starts pouring. While Appleton stirs the liquid with the wooden spoon, he puts down the first saucer and takes the second one.

It's a tricky process, but after Appleton stirs for the third time and the liquid turns a transparent red for a few seconds, Jungkook feels elated.

“We did it!!”

He turns to his partner, immensely proud of himself, but when he sees Appleton’s face, sporting a wide grin, a flash of discomfort runs through his brain. For a second, he thinks he sees someone else there, another face in front of him, instead of Appleton’s long pointy nose and blue eyes; and suddenly, a shot of pain stabs him in the chest, choking him, and he starts coughing.

Bloody hell, it hurts, he thinks vaguely during his coughing fit. His lungs feel squeezed, entangled in a vine full of thorns, and he can’t breathe; there’s something huge going up his airways, pushing its way out, and he doubles over and spits it up in the aisle between the desks.

When he opens his watering eyes, he knows what to expect (the metallic tang in his mouth doesn’t leave him much doubt about what happened) but the sight still takes him by surprise.

There’s a bunch of white rose petals, stained with blood, at his feet. Jungkook stares at them, heart racing.

It’s real. It’s *real.*

It’s not that he didn’t believe Jimin, because he knows him, and he knows he wouldn’t have invented something like that just to have a laugh at his expanse. He knows he obliviated himself and he knows his past self had very good reasons to do it; his sore throat is testimony to that.

But hearing his friends talking about it, it felt like a legend, a story that had happened to someone else.

Not anymore.

It’s real, he keeps thinking. He’s coughing up flowers. He’s dying—he’s *still* dying. The pain in his chest doesn’t leave him a single doubt on that subject.

Slowly, he stands back up. Everyone in the classroom is staring at him. Behind his desk, Professor Dillingus is watching him with his mouth wide open and Kim Taehyung, just on the other side of the aisle, looks horrified.

In a silence so deep he could hear a pin drop, Jungkook leans down and gathers the petals together. He can’t spell away the evidence, but he’s not going to leave it there for everyone to see, even if the damage is done. He puts everything in the pockets of his robes and plasters a smile on his bloodless face.

“Sorry about that,” he says in a raspy voice that fills the silence like rolling thunder.

He wants to go back to his potion and pretend nothing happened, but Professor Dillingus doesn’t let him.

“Are you quite alright, my boy?” he asks, leaving his desk to come closer—nothing lackadaisical in his tone anymore. “Do you need to go to the hospital wing?”

“I’m alright, Professor. Everything’s fine,” Jungkook replies, with the same fake smile pasted on his mouth, but his hoarse voice belies his words, and so does the blood still staining his lips, which he wipes with the back of his hand.

His teacher’s brow furrows in deep concern. “I think you should go, Mr Jeon. You’re excused from class. Go to Madam Pomfrey and ask her for one of her marvellous potions, then you’ll be right as rain. Do you want Mr Appleton to go with you?”

Jungkook turns to his partner, who looks white as a sheet.

“No, Sir, it’s okay. I’ll go alone.” Since he’s excused, there’s really no reason to stay here any longer, but if he leaves, he’d rather be alone.

While he gathers his belongings, the students go back to their potions, but they keep chancing glances at him every so often; Kim Taehyung excepted, who doesn’t just glance, but downright stares. He looks pale, too; but seeing a classmate throw up bloodied flowers during class will do that to you, he supposes.

Bag over his shoulder, he says goodbye to Professor Dillingus, feeling the weight of the gaze of his fellow students on him, and leaves the room; but he doesn’t go to the hospital wing. That was out of the question from the beginning. Instead, he heads towards the Gryffindor Tower to take a short nap before coming down for dinner and telling Jimin and Hoseok what happened.

But try as he may, sleep never comes.

Petals and doodles

Chapter 3

There aren't many students gathered in the Great Hall when Jungkook comes down for dinner, but he easily spots Hoseok, sitting at the Hufflepuff table and reading a book. His hair is a vibrant brown, like it is every time he focuses on something important. He saw him earlier in the day, but so many things have happened during the last few hours that it feels like a century has passed since. Silently, he plops down next to him on the bench and puts his head on his friend's shoulder.

Hoseok turns his head towards him. "Hey, Kookie. Tough day?"

Jungkook sighs. He has to tell him, and Jimin; but he'd rather wait for Jimin to arrive to do that, so he doesn't have to tell the same story twice. Just thinking about it is hard enough already.

It's like a shift has happened this afternoon, and Jungkook thinks back on what Jimin told him about him being happy and joking. Well, that carefree feeling is completely gone now. Reality fell on him like a three tons rock, and he aches everywhere; his throat, his lungs, his heart, his head. His own body is pushing him towards the exit door.

"How was class?" Hoseok asks, maybe sensing that something's wrong with him and trying to distract him, but going the wrong way about it.

"I'll tell you when Jimin gets here," Jungkook finally whispers. "Let me just rest for a second."

Hoseok's bony shoulder isn't particularly comfortable, but he spent the past two hours crying in his bed, and any company right now is better than being alone. Hoseok wraps an arm against his back and softly strokes his arm, and Jungkook could cry again, just there, but he manages to hold it back.

The Great Hall slowly fills, and people throw weird glances at them, but Jungkook doesn't know if it's because of the way they're hugging or if it's because he threw up flowers full of blood during his Potions class.

When Jimin arrives, he looks confused for a moment, seeing his best friend cuddling with his boyfriend, but when he sits down on the other side of the table, his confusion morphs into worry.

"You don't look good, Jungkook," he says softly. "You're very pale."

Jungkook finally leans away from Hoseok, who lets him go after squeezing his arm. “We have a problem.”

But before he’s able to recount to them what happened, Kim Seokjin sits down on the bench next to Jimin, eyes wide.

“Jungkook!” he exclaims. “Is it true you puked up flowers during class?”

“*What?!*” Jimin shrieks. “Is it true, Jungkook?”

“Yeah,” Jungkook nods with a sombre look. “That’s what I was about to tell you.”

“So… the spell…”

“The spell didn’t work.”

“What didn’t work?” Seokjin asks. “What spell? Did this happen before? Why didn’t you tell me?”

It’s hard to remember Seokjin was, in all likelihood, something like a big brother to Jungkook. Right now, he’s an intruder, an outsider, and Jungkook doesn’t really want to tell him what’s happening; but he knows the whole school will know soon enough, if it doesn’t already, and it would be unkind to leave his former big brother out of the loop.

“I’m sick,” he explains. “Or rather, I was cursed. I keep coughing up flowers.”

“Oh, boy,” Seokjin exhales. “Tough luck. Have you spoken to the nurse? When will it stop?”

Jungkook glances at Jimin and Hoseok.

“What?” Seokjin presses. “What aren’t you telling me?”

“There’s no counter-curse, Jinnie,” Hoseok says softly. “It’s a love curse. It keeps going until the person Jungkook loves reciprocates his feelings.”

Seeing Seokjin’s face scrunch in confusion, Jimin shakes his head. “But we don’t know who that is. Jungkook… was hit by a memory charm. He forgot a lot of things.”

At that, Seokjin looks enraged, but Jungkook is grateful to his friends for leaving out some details, like the fact he’s dying. It’s not something he wants to hear or talk about right now.

“You were *hit by a memory charm?* Who did that? What did you forget?”

“You,” Jungkook replies bluntly. “I’m sorry, but I forgot you. I only know who you are because Jimin told me. I’m sorry.”

For a moment, there’s only silence. Seokjin looks aghast, his eyes and mouth wide open, frozen in shock.

“You forgot me?”

“Not just you,” Jimin tries to comfort him, though maybe he’s going the wrong way about it, judging by the way Seokjin’s frown deepens. “He forgot there was a house called Slytherin and everybody in it. He forgot what a Potions class was.”

“B… But… how? Who? Who would obliviate you?”

“I did,” Jungkook sighs. “I obliviated myself. I thought it might help make the spell go away. You know, if I can’t remember the person I love, I wouldn’t be sick. That’s what I thought.”

“Jungkook,” Seokjin whispers, a crease in his brow. “Why did you… You forgot me! I can’t believe…”

“He was hurting, you know?” Jimin says softly. “He couldn’t even eat anymore, his throat hurt so much. He thought he was doing what was best.”

Jungkook shakes his head. “Turns out it wasn’t, since I still throw up flowers.”

“About that. What happened?” Hoseok starts stroking his back again, and Jungkook draws courage from the comforting gesture.

“I don’t know. I was brewing Veritaserum. There was a tricky part and I looked at my partner, and… something happened. It was like a subliminal image…”

“A what?” The three of them ask at the same time, looking lost.

Jungkook lets out a sigh. Usually, he would explain, keen as he always is on trying to build a bridge between wizard and muggle cultures, but today, he’s way too exhausted.

“I was looking at Jordan, but for a second, I thought I saw someone else there,” he says instead. “But there wasn’t anyone. It was him. My lungs and my head started aching and I coughed up petals.”

“Jordan? Appleton?” Jimin says, frowning. “Why were you partnering with him?”

“*This* is what you get out of everything I said?” Jungkook raises an eyebrow.

“No, but he could have cursed you, I don’t know. He’s a Slytherin. And you’re calling him *Jordan*?”

“I don’t even remember him! I didn’t know if he was a friend or if he was someone we don’t like. Had to ask that Taehyung guy what his name was so I wouldn’t spend two hours wondering what to call him.”

“You don’t remember Taehyung either?” Seokjin asks, looking flabbergasted. “My brother?”

Jungkook pulls a face, only remembering now that the two of them are related. “Yeah, sorry… Forgot him too.”

Seokjin stands up. Jungkook wonders if he crossed a line, if this is where too much is too much. Maybe forgetting Seokjin is okay, but forgetting his little brother is an insult to

everything sacred? He almost expects getting jinxed, or hit in the face. Under the table, he stretches his fingers, ready to try some wandless magic to defend himself if need be.

Instead, Seokjin looks over the tables, to the Slytherin table, visibly looking for something. When he finds it, his gaze lightens up.

“You said this was a curse, right, Jungkookie?” he asks then, looking back at Jungkook, who nods, a bit confused. Seokjin wasn’t planning on attacking him, then. “Because Yoongi’s fascinated by dark magic and its uses. Maybe he’ll know about the curse, and maybe he’ll find a counter-curse. Is it okay if I ask for his help? And maybe Namjoon too, if you don’t mind? Two great minds are better than one.”

“Sure,” Jungkook replies, relaxing a bit. “Let me know if they find something.”

“Of course!”

It’s only when he’s gone, and it’s just the three of them again, that Jungkook turns to his friends. “I feel like I’m supposed to know who this Yoongi and this Namjoon are, but I don’t.”

Jimin gives him a weak smile. “Figures.”

“Namjoon is our Head Boy, in Ravenclaw,” Hoseok explains. “A good mate, and real clever, too. He’s Seokjin’s cousin, and Seokjin’s been living with him and his parents ever since he left his home. Namjoon’s best friend is Yoongi, a Slytherin student who's also in seventh year. Very clever too, that one, but he’s a bit unsociable, so he only ever hangs out with Joon, Jinnie and Taehyung. He’s not a dark wizard, but he’s fascinated by dark magic. If there is something to know about this Hanahaki curse, Yoongi might know it. I should have thought about asking him sooner.”

“Yes, but Jungkookie didn’t want anybody else knowing about the curse,” Jimin reminds him. “He didn’t even want to ask our DADA teacher about it. By the way, how do you feel, now that the cat is out of the bag?”

“Terrified,” Jungkook truthfully replies. “But I can’t obliviate the whole school, can I?”

“You should have obliviated the whole Potions class, at least,” Jimin jokes weakly.

Maybe he should have. He remembers Kim Taehyung’s pallid face when he stood back up, and thinks it might have been better for everyone if he had.

“He couldn’t have with that dud wand anyway.” Hoseok replies, always there to state the facts when needed. “I’m curious about one thing, though. Why did you forget what you forgot?”

Jungkook and Jimin both frown.

“What do you mean?” Jungkook asks.

“Why forget Slytherin? Why forget Seokjin? It all has to be connected to the person you really wanted to erase from your brain, right?”

“I suppose so, yes…”

“So we should make a list of everything you did forget to trace it back to the one person the spell was for. And then, when we find them, you could confess to them and maybe get rid of your curse that way.”

Jungkook stares at the table, thinking about it. “It’s not a bad idea,” he says slowly, “but, for one thing, we don’t know if just confessing is enough or if the curse needs reciprocation. And secondly, the old Jungkook told you it would be impossible for him to confess.”

“The old Jungkook is you, you know,” Jimin says softly. “Besides, why would it be impossible?”

“I don’t know. But if he… I mean, if *I* said it, I probably had a good reason. Do you suppose I’d be the type to avoid confessing to someone, knowing that I would die if I didn’t? I like to think I have more sense than that.”

“That’s true,” Hoseok frowns. “But it’s a problem for another day. First, we should try to find this person, *then* we’ll decide what to do.”

“Could it be Seokjin?”

Seeing his friends stare at him with round eyes after his question, Jungkook frowns.

“Reckon I didn’t tell you that I fancied blokes.”

“First time hearing of it,” Hoseok confirms. “It’d be very hypocritical of us to have a problem with that, though. What makes you think it could be Seokjin?”

“Nothing much,” Jungkook shrugs. “He’s just… gorgeous, I suppose? First thing I noticed when I saw him.”

“First thing everybody notices when they see him,” Jimin giggles. “So! Seokjin. Let’s start there. If you wanted to forget him, it’d make sense that you’d forget Yoongi, Namjoon, and Taehyung too. But why Slytherin?”

“Because he comes from a Slytherin family?” Hoseok suggests. “Why forget Potions, though?”

“Maybe he helped me with the subject when I needed help?”

“You never needed help with Potions,” Jimin remarks. “You were always good at it.”

Hoseok scratches his nose. “What about Taehyung? Could that have been him?”

“Kim Taehyung? Well… he is fit,” Jungkook admits. “But I thought he was a prat and we didn’t like him?”

“He is,” Jimin nods adamantly. “We don’t.”

“If I fancied him, then, wouldn’t you have noticed?”

“I probably would have, yes. And *Kim Taehyung!* You hate him! He hates us! No, it must be someone else.”

“Although it would explain *why* confessing would feel impossible,” Hoseok points out.

He’s not wrong—and just as he says it, Kim Taehyung crosses the Hall towards the Slytherin table. Their eyes meet for a few seconds, and then Kim turns away, his face devoid of emotion, sitting with his back turned to him.

“What if we searched your room?” Hoseok suggests. “Maybe there’s something in there that could give us a clue. A diary, something like that.”

Jungkook isn’t so sure about this—he doesn’t remember keeping a diary—but it can’t hurt.

“Sure. Let’s go after dinner.”

Of course, he doesn’t eat—there isn’t any soup on the table.

☆☆☆

Jungkook shares his room with four other Gryffindor students, whom he remembers perfectly well: Arnold Briggs, Jordi Alcaraz, Noah Jones and Charlie McLean. They all get along well, but Jungkook is still relieved to find they’re not in the dorm right now.

“Ok!” Jimin exclaims. “Let’s get into it. Now’s the time to hide your porn, Jaykay.”

Jungkook grins. “Where would I even get porn? They don’t sell it at Hogsmeade.”

“Wizards always find ways to get porn,” Hoseok declares in a wise tone, waggling his finger. “And they do sell it at Hogsmeade… if you know where to look. Alright, let’s dig in.”

They pull Jungkook’s trunk from under the bed and open it to take a look into it, removing one item after the other.

“I’m amazed at how tidy you keep your trunk,” Jimin marvels. “Mine’s full of rubbish.”

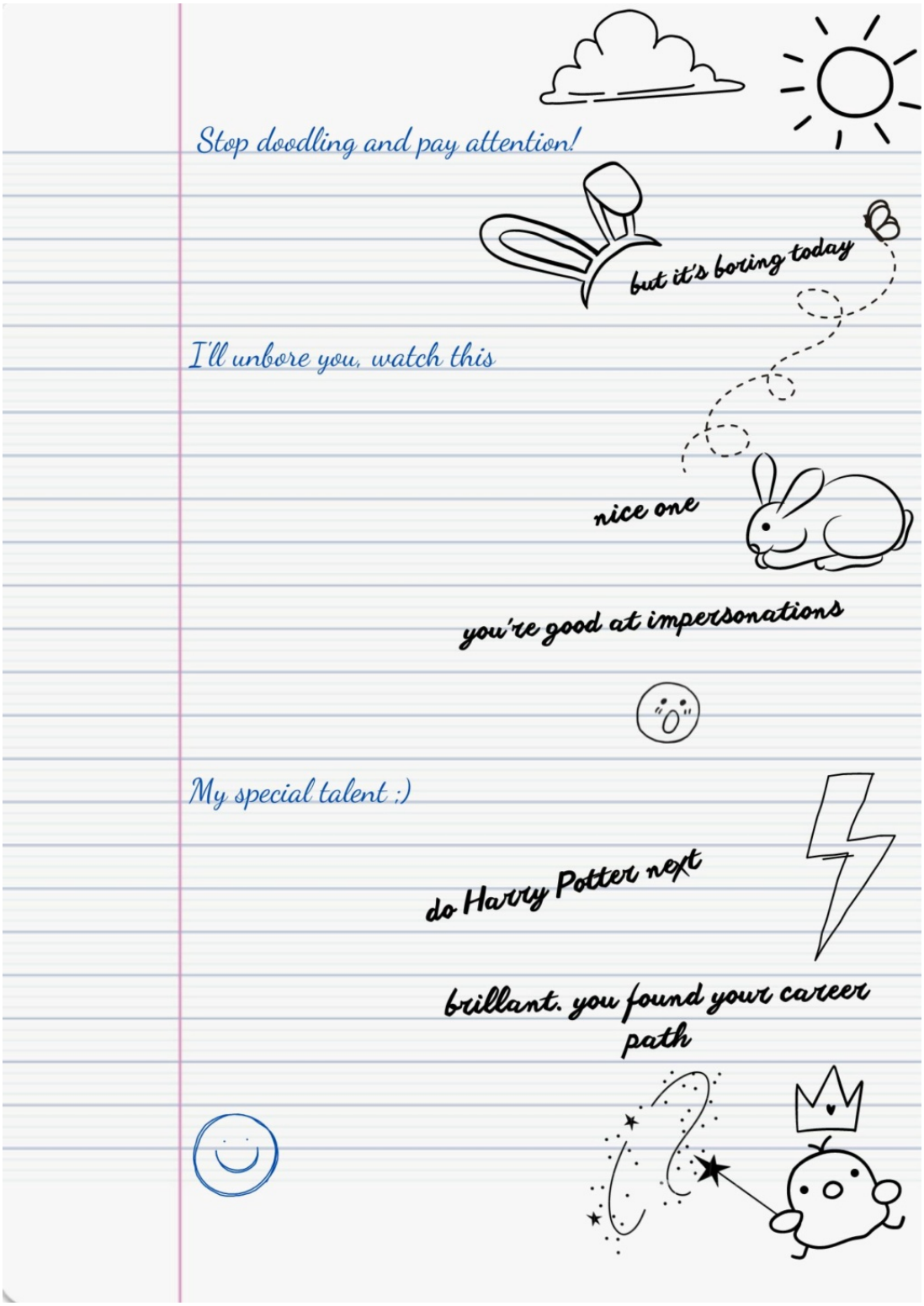
“I clean it every summer. Don’t want to risk a doxy infestation.”

They split the books between the three of them, while Jungkook wonders if there’s really a chance he could have written something in the margins, anything that would give them a clue. If he didn’t tell Jimin, if the identity of the person he fancied was a well-kept secret, he wouldn’t have been so reckless as to write about it in his schoolbooks.

The notebooks take a longer time to peruse, but Jungkook is a very disciplined student, it seems, only writing notes about the subjects, aside from the doodles adorning the corners. He forgot about that, he realises with a jolt: that he liked drawing. It's strange. It's something he should be able to remember about himself.

"Look," says Hoseok suddenly. He's examining a notebook with a worn-out black leather binding. There are recipes and ingredients listed inside, and more doodles, but that's not what interests him. "Was it Jimin you were chatting with?"

Jungkook gingerly takes the book and looks at the page. There's a short conversation, written in two different cursives.



The conversation stops there. Jungkook doesn't remember ever writing this, but he recognises his barely legible scrawl. The other is a beautiful handwriting that he knows is not Jimin's even before his friend shakes his head.

"That wasn't me."

“Who could it be, then?”

“It could be anyone,” Jungkook sighs, before looking up at Hoseok. “It could even be you trying to impersonate someone with your metamorphmagus abilities.”

“First, I don’t remember. Second, this was written during a lesson, otherwise, you wouldn’t have said it was boring. Maybe Potions? There are recipes written in this. And you forgot that Potions was a thing.”

“Maybe,” Jungkook shrugs. “Hey, what about Appleton? He’s in Potions with me. Maybe he’s the one I wanted to forget?”

“Appleton?” Jimin purses his lips, looking like he’s bitten into a lemon. “If you really fancied that prat, I get why you’d want to keep it a secret.”

“Do we hate him?”

“We don’t hate him,” Hoseok states firmly. “He’s a few sandwiches short of a picnic, but he’s not a bad sort. Jimin doesn’t like him because he was sick all over him after he drank too much spiked pumpkin juice during the Yule Ball last year. Completely pissed, he was.”

“You *had* to tattle,” Jimin moans. “He didn’t remember, you didn’t have to tell him!”

“Oh Merlin,” Jungkook wheezes. “I wish I could remember that. I barely even remember the Yule Ball.”

“Which is why we should keep searching, instead of having fun at someone’s expanse,” Jimin says in a flat tone. “Come on!”

He’s right, Jungkook thinks, sobering up. Every second, he’s getting an inch closer to death.

His friends rifle through his souvenirs and magical items without finding anything; Jungkook, for his part, takes a look at his clothes. He remembers all of them, but he still finds something strange, wrapped in a Gryffindor scarf: a package containing a box of crayons and an expensive-looking, red leather notebook. His heart jumps in his chest when he sees the two items, even if he’s not sure why. The crayons are untouched; on the first page of the notebook, there is a single sentence, in the same beautiful cursive as before.

Doodle your heart out :)

But there isn’t a single doodle in it; there isn’t anything, except for the few words written on the page.

Nonetheless, Jungkook suddenly feels a sharp pang of sadness that immediately turns into searing pain. He barely has the time to get away from the trunk before he coughs up white petals stained with blood. His lungs constrict. He can almost feel the vines digging into them, worming their way around his heart.

When the fit is over, after he's coughed up the equivalent of a full bowl of petals, he wipes his bloodied mouth and chin with a trembling hand. "Shit," he whispers. It's painful to talk, to even breathe.

His friends, of course, are deathly pale. Hoseok's hair and eyebrows have become a pure white, the colour of his fear. Jimin's eyes are full of tears.

"Sorry," Jungkook murmurs with some difficulty. The words grate against his throat. "Dunno what happened."

With a wave of his shaking wand, Hoseok Vanishes the petals. "We need to find out who you love, Jungkook. And quickly. You need to confess."

Jungkook shrugs. He feels knackered, all of a sudden, like all his energy has evaporated through his skin, and he's aching everywhere.

"I'm tired," he replies in a toneless voice, standing up. "Can we do that later?"

"Of course, Jungkook," Jimin replies in a comforting voice, sending everything flying back inside the trunk and putting it under the bed with a spell. "We'll let you rest."

Hoseok doesn't look like he wants to leave Jungkook's side, but Jimin tugs on his arm.

"Let us know if you need something, yeah?" he finally asks while letting Jimin drag him away. "Okay, Jungkook?"

"Sure," Jungkook manages a weak smile. He barely has the strength to stay upright. That last coughing fit completely drained him.

As soon as his friends shut the door behind them, he lets himself fall on his bed and closes his eyes. There's a deep fatigue seeping through his bones, his veins.

And still, he's unable to sleep.

☆☆☆

The next morning is hell on his body. He hasn't eaten much in two days (or maybe more than that, he doesn't remember), he's famished and his legs and hands are trembling; he keeps clearing his throat to keep the ache at bay, but it only serves to make it worse. His sleep-deprived mind feels cottony, his thoughts are blurry. He needs to eat something.

The sky is still dark when he gets up. His roommates are tucked in their beds, curtains closed. Today is Saturday, so they don't have to wake up early, but if Jungkook remembers correctly (after the past two days, he's not sure of anything anymore), he's got Quidditch practice this morning. He's practically certain he won't be able to ride a broom without falling off, but the least he can do is warn the Captain of his team.

There isn't anyone else in the Great Hall when he comes down for breakfast, and the enchanted ceiling displays an endless starry sky, but the house-elves are hard at work and the four immense tables are already laden with food and drinks. He manages to get some hot chocolate down, hoping the sugary beverage will give him enough energy to make his head stop spinning.

Is this how it's always going to be? He can't help but wonder. Slowly becoming unable to eat anything, until hunger takes him away even before the flowers growing in his lungs can? Merlin, but he really wants to find the person who cursed him, just so he can ask him one of the questions that keep him awake at night: why? Why him? Was it revenge? Or just blind cruelty?

The hot cocoa calms him down some. He still needs to find a more permanent solution, but it's easier with a quieter stomach—and it soothes his throat, too. After a second bowl, his hands stop shaking and his brain clears up a bit, enough for him to think about what he should do next.

One thing is obvious: the Memory charm wasn't enough to make the disease dwindle; it's still there, hiding inside his body, and it might not be growing as quickly as it did before (of that, he's not certain), but it sure as hell isn't shrinking either. It was his past self's best chance, but this Jungkook's best guess is that he was at a too advanced stage of the disease already.

His options are limited, now. He lists them mentally, counting on his fingers.

1. Get the procedure Hoseok talked about, and effectively become a zombie. The thought makes him shudder with dread.
2. Let the flowers grow until they squeeze his heart to death, or until he starves, or until his trachea ruptures if he ends up coughing up entire flower heads, which the book said was a very real possibility—an unpleasant thought that hadn't quite crossed his mind yet, but that he finds difficult to forget now.
3. Investigate everything he doesn't remember to try and trace it back to the one person he meant to forget. It might take some time. Then, confess to them and hope to Merlin his feelings are returned.
4. Find a way to reverse the memory charm. Then, once he remembers them, confess to the one he fancies, and hope to Merlin his feelings are returned.

If he wants to live, the last option would be the quickest, but the scariest part of it is how his sole hope of successfully staying alive lies in the hands of another; someone he doesn't know, whose only proof of existence is the garden developing in his body. What if the other one doesn't love him? Admitting he even finds them, would it be fair to go to them and say, *I'm dying and your love is the only thing that can save me?* Wouldn't it be considered coercion? Emotional manipulation? Can the curse detect that? What are its criteria?

"Hey, Jungkook," a soft voice says, pulling him from his swirling thoughts.

He turns his head to see the seventh-year Ravenclaw Head Boy, Namjoon, who's smiling at him with dimples on his cheeks. Jungkook can't help but stare at the foreign face, wondering

how well they knew each other before he forgot everything (and all for nothing, he knows now).

“Namjoon, right?”

Namjoon’s eyes go wide. “So you really don’t remember me. I thought Seokjin was taking the piss out of me. You know, he’s always joking, you never know what’s real and what’s bollocks.”

“This is real,” Jungkook says in a low voice. “I’m sorry I forgot about you. Did Seokjin tell you why?”

“Yup. I’ve never heard of such a strange curse before, and neither did Yoongi, even though he’s sort of an expert on dark curses. He’s fascinated, though, I think he’s going to spend his whole day in the library trying to find something about it. We’ll let you know if he does, yeah?”

Jungkook can’t help but feel disappointed. He was hoping this Yoongi would know something about the curse; if he doesn’t already, then he won’t find anything more in the library than Hoseok and Jimin did—especially since they kept the only book that mentioned the curse.

He doesn’t voice it, though, out of respect for the Head Boy and his friends, who only want to help him; but Namjoon must be very observant, because he grins.

“I know, you’ve probably tried that already, right? But as Head Boy, I’ve got free access to the Restricted Section. There might be something in there, who knows?”

Oh, Jungkook thinks, eyes widening. It changes everything.

“Thanks, Namjoon. Appreciate it.”

“Don’t mention it. So, throwing up flowers, heh? Sounds a bit bonkers even for the magical world, to be honest. How are you feeling?”

“Like I’m dying,” Jungkook replies unironically.

Namjoon, of course, doesn’t think for one second he’s speaking in a literal sense. “Yeah,” he grimaces. “Can’t imagine what it feels like. We’ll do our best to dig everything we can about this curse, I promise.”

Jungkook nods gratefully. “Alright.”

Overhead, the enchanted ceiling has turned from twinkling stars to a pale blue morning that promises a sunny day. More students are coming in to eat; with a sympathetic pat on his shoulder, Namjoon leaves him be and goes to sit next to Seokjin’s brother Taehyung, who’s seated at the Slytherin table, facing Jungkook and watching him, as usual, with a frown.

A few minutes later, the Quidditch team Captain, Leah Wilson, stops next to him. She too has heard what happened the day before, and he gets another pat on the shoulder. *Why do people*

keep touching you when they're pitying you? Jungkook wonders, but doesn't say out loud.

"It's okay," she says after he explains he doesn't feel good enough to ride a broom today. "I'll tell the rest of the team. Come back when you feel better, heh?"

Jungkook nods with a forced smile, all the while wondering if he's ever going to feel better at all. Unfortunately, it's not up to him.

If the person he loves doesn't love him back and he has to undertake the procedure in order not to die, maybe he'll stop loving Quidditch too, he realises suddenly. And the worst thing is that it's not even the worst thing. He doesn't mind not being able to ever fall in love again, especially now, since he doesn't remember what it feels like, and the idea of living his life without passion is terrifying, but he might still give it a try, if he had to; but what he doesn't want, what he cannot bear, is to look at Jimin and Hoseok and be unable to recall what it was like to love them.

Just as he's picturing it, his two friends come inside the Great Hall, Jimin wrapped in his black and yellow scarf even though it's already May, and Hoseok with matching canary hair. When they sit next to him, he immediately tells them what Namjoon said, but before they can reply, something attracts their attention: the matron, Madam Pomfrey, an elderly but still quite fierce lady, is making her way through the tables.

It's so rare to see her down here that the students gawk at her as she passes, and Jungkook has a bad feeling. Sure enough, she stops in front of him, her brow furrowed.

"Mr Jeon," she says in her high, shrilly voice. "Professor Dillingus has told me about what happened to you yesterday. He was quite surprised when I told him you never set foot in the hospital wing, like you said you would."

Bugger, Jungkook thinks.

"I'm fine, Madam Pomfrey, I assure you," he tries. "It only happened once."

Or twice. Same difference. Unfortunately, Madam Pomfrey isn't fazed.

"Be that as it may, Mr Jeon, I would like for you to accompany me to the hospital wing so I can take a look at you. Vomiting flowers is not a common occurrence."

Jungkook glances at Jimin and Hoseok, who look like they don't know what to do. One of Hoseok's strands of hair has whitened, and Jungkook knows that it means fear. He remembers what they told him before; his past self didn't want to tell the adults because he was scared of being forcefully sent to St Mungo's and having his feelings literally ripped off his chest. As a rule, he doesn't like going to the hospital wing; he's certainly not going to right now, in this situation.

Suddenly, a voice flashes through his mind, saying, *you're burning up, Jungkook. You should go to the hospital wing.* It's not Jimin's, nor Hoseok's, not even his own. It's not a thought, it's a memory. He knows this, because as soon as he hears the voice, pain swells up in his

chest and once again, he falls on all fours on the floor and throws up white petals stained with red.

It goes on and on and on, for an eternity or two; at least, that's how he feels. Something huge and hard is blocking his airways and he's coughing, again and again, to get it out, until he finally manages to spit it out: a whole flower head, relatively small, compared to how hard it was to expel it, dripping with deep red blood.

When the flower head is out, he's finally able to gulp in some desperately needed air, but his trachea burns, there are black spots in his vision and he's close to falling unconscious. Panting, he lays his head on Hoseok's knee and closes his eyes. Sweat is forming on his brow; he barely feels the fresh palm one of his friends puts on his flushed cheek.

"Bloody hell! Jungkook!"

He wants to speak, say he's okay, but his throat hurts too much; there's the metallic tang of blood again, and the liquid feeling of it when he swallows it.

This is how he's going to die, and soon. For a second, he wonders if he shouldn't just die already—it hurts too much.

When he finally opens an eye, he sees a crowd of people gathered around him; some eyeing him with stupefaction, others with concern. He turns his head to see Jimin and Hoseok looking like ghosts. Once again, Hoseok's hair has turned white. Madam Pomfrey herself seems worried.

"Will you come with me now, Mr Jeon?"

Sighing, Jungkook closes his eyes.

Expiration date

Jimin and Hoseok help him walk to the hospital wing, his arms wrapped around their shoulders. It's such a shame that it's impossible to Apparate inside Hogwarts, Jungkook thinks. Well, not that he would be able to. He's not seventeen yet. But walking the miles upon miles of hallways that separate the hospital wing from the Great Hall is akin to torture.

"Very well, gentlemen," Madam Pomfrey says when Jungkook is finally sitting on one of the beds, panting. "Thank you for your help. Now, please leave us alone."

"But…!" Jimin starts.

"No buts." Her blue eyes are inflexible. "Away with you, now. Let me tend to my patient. The longer you'll stay here, the longer he will be in pain."

That does the trick; Jimin and Hoseok scarper immediately. Once the door closes, Pomfrey eyes him critically.

"Well now, boy. Can you speak?"

Jungkook opens his mouth to try, but she raises a hand to stop him.

"On second thought, don't. I'll do the talking. I know what's ailing you. I've seen it once, when I was still working at St Mungo's. Do you know what it is?"

Jungkook nods, silent. Pomfrey looks surprised.

"Well. You've done your research, it seems. It's a rare Japanese curse called Hanahaki. Do you remember when you were hit? Or who cursed you?"

Jungkook shakes his head.

"Never mind this," Pomfrey continues. "We will talk about it later, let's take care of you first. Does your throat hurt?"

Nod.

"Too much to eat properly?"

Nod.

"Let me see. Go on, open up."

Docile, he opens his mouth wide, and she leans in to examine it with a flat wooden stick before straightening up.

“I see. First, I will give you a potion to heal your throat. Note that it won’t heal your disease, just the throat. The next time you’ll vomit flowers, it’ll start hurting again, but I’ll give you the same potion to soothe it again. Do you want that?

Yes, Jungkook nods frantically, eyes wide and hopeful. A small smile plays on Pomfrey’s lips.

“I’ll get it right away, then.”

When she comes back from her office, she’s carrying not one, but three bottles on a platter, that she levitates onto the bedside table. Jungkook sends her a curious glance.

“There’s the healing potion,” she says, handing him a small wooden cup for him to hold while she pours a purple velvety liquid inside. “Drink it now. Slowly. In five minutes, you’ll feel better.”

He does drink it. The taste is awful, the pain unbearable, like fire pinpricks tearing at his flesh, but when everything is down and the cup is empty, he immediately notices a difference. The pain starts receding. (A little.)

“This one,” she adds, pointing at the second bottle, “is a nutrition potion, which you’ll probably need if you missed as many meals as I think you missed.”

“Yes,” Jungkook croaks—a bit too soon. The word sends a pang through his muscles and tendons.

Pomfrey shoots him a dark look. “Don’t try to go too fast,” she warns. “One step at the time. That was a nasty injury you got there.”

Chastened, Jungkook nods.

“The last one is a sleep potion. I thought you might need it. Do you?”

He nods adamantly.

“And now,” Pomfrey says, “let’s talk about the curse. First, I’ll tell you what I know, while your throat is recovering, and then you’ll tell me what you know. The Hanahaki curse only affects those who are in love, I suppose you already know that.” (Nod.) “There is no known counter-curse. The most efficient way to get rid of it is having your feelings reciprocated.” (Nod.) “In case that is not an option, magically removing the flowers is possible.” (Tense nod.) “This procedure is dangerous and bears severe consequences.”

Jungkook softly clears his throat. It’s getting better, now.

“It’s not… I mean… nobody will force me to do that if I don’t want to, will they?” His voice is still hoarse, but the beverage is working its quite literal magic. “Like, send me to St Mungo’s and remove the flowers whether I want to or not?”

Pomfrey’s eyebrows almost shoot to the ceiling.

“Good gracious, no. We’re not barbarians.”

Jungkook suddenly breathes better—although the healing potion probably has something to do with it.

“Good,” he replies a bit shakily. “Brilliant.”

“Now that we’ve established this, let’s hear your side of the story. Have you tried confessing to your beloved?”

He grimaces. “Probably not.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

Jungkook inhales deeply (it feels like a fresh breeze in his brain) and tells her about the botched memory charm. Now that Seokjin knows about it, chatterbox as he is, the rest of the school probably knows too, but he still feels naked, recounting to the matron what happened.

“Why on Earth would you do something like that?” Pomfrey asks when he’s finished. “Haven’t you learnt anything in school for these past six years? Never, *never* cast a negative intent charm at yourself! Most wands can’t take it. You’re lucky you didn’t blow your brains out.”

He’s surprised to hear that this is what got her attention, and not the fact that he resolved to use a memory charm at all—she probably gets *why* he would.

“It didn’t work anyway. I’m still coughing up flowers. If I want to confess, my only chance is to reverse the spell, but I’m the only one who can do that, right?”

“That’s right. Magic has a signature that is as unique as fingerprints, you see. When a wizard casts a memory charm, it is akin to locking a door. Their own magic is the only thing that can open it again, like a key fitted to a one-of-a-kind keyhole, if you will. Of course, some wizards can blow the keyhole if they don’t have the key, but, like with a real door, the damage is quite extensive. And it necessitates a tremendous amount of magical power.”

“Right. So I’m the one who needs to do it. But I don’t have a wand anymore.”

“Then I suggest you hurry up and buy one without losing a second,” she says drily. “I can heal your throat, but the flowers keep growing in your lungs. The vines will keep squeezing them so you won’t be able to breathe, or they will wrap around your heart and literally break it.”

Seems fitting, considering the curse, Jungkook thinks.

“You need to confess to your loved one as soon as possible and hope for the best outcome,” she continues. “It’s your best chance. Unfortunately, the Headmaster is away for three days—a personal matter. Until he returns and gives his permission for you to go to London to get a new wand, I strongly suggest you use one of your friends’, to gain as much time as possible.”

Her urgent tone is scaring Jungkook. “How long do you think I’ve got left if I don’t do anything?”

Her demeanour suddenly softens. “I cannot say for sure. But from what I know from my previous experience, I would say… a month. Possibly less.”

Jungkook feels like a sack full of bricks just fell on his head. He’s dizzy, stunned, shocked at how, suddenly, in a few words, he was stamped with an expiration date. He knew it was real; now, it feels inescapable.

“That… That person you saw who was hit by the curse before,” he whispers, and bites his lower lip. “Did they… Did they make it.” He can’t even lift his tone to make it a question.

Suddenly, her gaze is intolerably gentle. He wants to close his eyes so he doesn’t have to see it anymore.

“No, Jungkook,” she replies in the softest voice he’s ever heard her use. “They didn’t.”

☆☆☆

The matron convinces him to stay in the hospital wing and take a quick nap, which he achieves by taking a few drops of the dreamless potion he’s supposed to drink tonight. When he wakes up, he feels a lot more rested, his throat is practically as good as new and his limbs don’t feel as weak as those of a newborn, thanks to the nutrition potion. Physically, he feels fine.

Too bad it’s spoiled by the fact that he now knows he’s going to die within a month, at best.

He gloomily thanks Pomfrey, who tells him his friends visited when he was asleep. Jungkook half-expects them to be waiting in the hallway outside of the hospital wing, pacing and biting their nails, and already wonders how he’s going to break to them the news that they don’t have much time left to spend together; but when he pushes the high wooden door and steps out, they aren’t here.

There is someone else, though: Kim Taehyung.

When he sees Jungkook, he jumps from the wall he was leaning on and blushes. “I… I needed to ask Madam Pomfrey something…"

Jungkook frowns, at first wondering why he didn’t come in, then, instead of waiting outside.

Then, it dawns on it.

“Were you waiting for me?”

“W-Why would I be waiting for you?” Kim stutters, glaring at him, before he finally lowers his head. “Maybe. Yeah. I was wondering how you were. It was a bit shocking seeing you puke all those flowers. Twice.”

Jungkook scrutinises him. He really has the most perfect face he's ever seen—to the point it would almost have been unfair if he'd been a good guy too.

"Why would you care? We don't get along, isn't that right? At least, that's what Jimin told me."

Kim stares at him, mouth agape. "I thought Seokjin was pulling my leg. But you really did forget me, didn't you?"

Jungkook shrugs, embarrassed. "Yeah. Sorry. Does that mean we *did* get along?"

"…No," Kim replies after a long pause, looking away. "No, we didn't."

It's hard to navigate people's emotions; even harder when you've forgotten about them, but Jungkook is pretty sure there is something else, here. Hidden under the velvety tone of his deep voice, behind the shadows in his eyes. He'd bet his life on it.

(Admittedly, there's not much left of it to bet.)

"Was it you?" he can't help asking, in a low voice. From where he's standing, he can smell his perfume.

It's a nice perfume.

"…Beg pardon?" Kim frowns.

"Was it you I was in love with? That I was trying to forget?"

Kim's eyes widen. For a moment, he seems unable to reply, then a joyless smile plays on the corner of his lips.

"Very unlikely."

Why? Jungkook wonders. Why would it be? But before he can ask, Kim turns around and walks away, leaving Jungkook with no more answers, but many new questions.

Shaking his head, he decides to go find his friends. After searching the whole castle, all the while wondering how much longer he'll get to wander about it, he finds them in the Gryffindor common room, which is relatively empty; it's barely three in the afternoon and everyone is probably outside, enjoying the nice weather.

"Jungkook!!" Jimin's cry pierces his ears as soon as he steps through the Fat Lady's portrait. "Are you alright? How do you feel?"

They're both staring at him, visibly anxious, wringing their hands. That's when Jungkook decides that he's not going to tell them. They already know he's dying; they had to live with it even longer than Jungkook, whose memories of it fell down the well. They don't need to know *when* it's going to happen. They don't need to experience the weight of that knowledge, that Jungkook feels on his heart right now—but maybe it's just the vines of his flowers wrapping around it.

“I feel better,” he tries to reassure them. “Pomfrey gave me potions. She knew about the curse, too.”

“Really?” Hoseok asks. “What did she say about it?”

“Nothing that we didn’t already know,” he replies, avoiding their gazes. Then he jerks his chin towards Jimin. “She wants your father to accompany me as soon as possible to Diagon Alley so I can buy a new wand, reverse the memory charm and confess. He’s gone for the next three days, though.”

“Ah, yes,” Jimin nods. “Mum is sick with the flu, someone had to watch Haneul. Can’t another teacher go with you?”

“Apparently, no student is allowed outside of the castle without the Headmaster’s permission, so I need to wait for him. It’s alright, though, three days won’t change much.”

“You could always use one of our wands?” Hoseok suggests. “It could work without even having to wait.”

“Sure,” Jungkook replies, although he’s thoroughly unconvinced, given how poorly he did with Jimin’s wand in Charms the day before.

“Let’s try it now, then. Here?”

“Too many people,” Jungkook shakes his head. There are only five students in the room, and all of them are intensively studying, but he doesn’t want to have an audience. “Let’s go upstairs.”

As expected, his bedroom is empty. The sun is passing through the windows, casting its rays on the stone floor and the neatly made beds, illuminating dust specks floating in the air. It feels cosy.

Merlin, I don’t want to die, Jungkook thinks. *I don’t want to die.*

The three of them sit on his bed, not minding the fact that it’s a little cramped. Jimin offers him his wand, eyebrows squished together, and Jungkook takes it. An unpleasant shiver runs through his spine. The wand is making sure he knows he’s not its owner—like he could forget.

Slowly, he points it at his head, like a cocked gun supposed to give him life rather than death. Hearing his friends’ intake of breath, he closes his eyes.

“*Memoriam,*” he whispers.

Although he can’t see it, he can tell the moment the spell leaves the tip of the wand. And that’s all. Nothing else happens. He wishes he could remember how it physically felt to lose his memories, so he could compare the two.

“Well?” Jimin asks.

Jungkook opens his eyes and sees his friends watching him closely, eyes wide, so he tests his mind. Does he remember Seokjin? Does he remember Kim Taehyung?

The answer is still no.

He shrugs. “Nothing.”

“Fuck,” Hoseok mutters. “Try with mine?”

“Not that I don’t want to play with your sticks, boys—,” he starts. Jimin rolls his eyes. Hoseok slaps him on the arm. He pays it no mind. “—but I don’t think it’ll work. I need a wand that I own.”

“*Try*, at least,” Hoseok replies, almost begging. “Trying can’t hurt.” He holds his want out to him.

Sighing, Jungkook takes it; this time, a small wave of nausea crosses his whole body and makes his stomach churn. Trying *can* hurt, in the end. He really doesn’t want to throw up once again.

“*Memoriam,*” he says in a dull tone, pointing at his head.

Nothing. There isn’t even a flash of light, nor sparks. The wand is deaf to his magic.

“Here.” He hands it back to Hoseok, who, judging by his crestfallen expression, already knows it failed. “Please do me a favour and never, *never* lend me your wand again, or I’ll puke all over your shoes.”

“Fuck!” Jimin swears, making them jump out of their skins. They’re not used to hearing him scream. “Fuck!! It should work!! Why didn’t it work?!”

“It’ll work, Jimin. Just wait till I get a new wand. It’ll work, we just have to be patient.”

“We can’t *afford* to be patient!” Jimin roars. “You’re dying!!”

“I feel way better since I went to the hospital wing.” It’s not even a lie. He’s still going to die, but at least he’ll be able to talk and eat until he does.

It doesn’t do anything to lift Jimin’s spirits, who wipes a tear at the corner of his eye. “I’ll send a letter to Dad,” he whispers. “No, I’ll Floo him. I’ll ask him to come back as soon as possible and take you to get that damn wand.”

Jungkook doesn’t say he still needs his parents to send him some money to be able to buy it. He’s not parading around the castle with ten galleons in his pockets. “Don’t,” he says instead. “Your sister needs him. I can wait a few days.”

“You can’t,” Jimin sighs—but at least he’s not screaming anymore.

“I can. I promise.”

At least, he hopes he can.

☆☆☆

Of course, by the next morning, there isn't a single soul in the school who doesn't know he's madly in love with someone to the point of vomiting flowers—there also isn't anyone left who doesn't know that he got hit by a memory charm and can't remember who he's supposed to love.

It doesn't take long for things to go pear-shaped.

"Hi, Jungkook! Fancy seeing you here!"

Jungkook, who's eating (*eating!! Thank Merlin!*) buttered toasts for breakfast, looks up to the boy who called out to him. He knows him; it's Appleton, his Potions partner. He's smiling so brightly that Jungkook has to squint to protect his eyesight.

"Hi… Jordan. What's up?"

Appleton sits on the bench opposite him. Jungkook tries not to make a face; he was saving the space for Jimin and Hoseok, who are supposed to come down and eat with him.

"I've been thinking. You've bit hit by a curse, right?"

"Yeah," Jungkook mutters.

"A curse that makes you throw up flowers until you confess your feelings to the one you fancy."

"Suppose so, yes."

"But you don't remember who that is because you cast a memory charm at yourself to forget."

"Listen, mate, you don't have to do a recap. It's my life, I know what's happening in it."

"Yes, yes, sure, but listen, I thought—well, maybe it could be me!"

Jungkook chokes on his toast. He has to grab his cup of tea to help it go down his now beautifully intact throat. Jordan smiles beatifically at him.

"I'm sorry, *what?*" he croaks when the offending piece of bread has vacated his oesophagus. "Come again?"

"It could be me!" the boy beams. "I mean, do you even remember me?"

“I don’t,” Jungkook confesses. “But then I’ve forgotten the whole of Slytherin house, so it doesn’t mean much.”

Appleton’s eyes widen. “You what? Bloody hell! Well, anyway, that’s not the point. The point is, maybe you fancied me but forgot about it. In which case, to get rid of the curse, the only thing you’d have to do is confess to me and Bob’s your uncle!”

Jungkook blinks. “I don’t know if confessing is enough. The curse might only be lifted if you fancied me too.”

This time, Appleton lowers his gaze, blushing a bit. “Well, would I even suggest this if I didn’t? This is why I’m telling you about it. If there’s a chance it was me you fancied, even if you don’t remember… you’d be cured. Since I fancy you.”

Jungkook can’t stop staring at him. He’s bold, he has to give him that—besides, he might even be right. It might be him. He’s forgotten Potions and Appleton was his partner.

“If you do, shouldn’t I already be cured?”

“Maybe you are? I didn’t see you cough up flowers since I told you I fancied you.”

Jungkook shakes his head, his mind overheating. This is bonkers. “Let me get this straight. You want me to… go out with you, I suppose, because you fancy me and I might fancy you too, and see if I’m cured?”

“Yes, that,” the boy grins. “What do you have to lose?”

Not much that he won’t lose later on anyway, that is true—still, something in this doesn’t sit right with him. He doesn’t *feel* in love with Appleton.

True, he doesn’t feel in love with anyone—but especially not with Appleton.

“What if it’s not you?”

“Well then, no harm no foul, right? We’ll both go our merry way, having tried our luck.”

He’s mad. He’s barking mad, but everything in Jungkook’s life is slowly losing its meaning these days, so, to hell with it.

“Fine. Let’s see if it works.”

Besides, he’s getting his memories back in a few days, so he’ll know for sure then—but if by doing that, he can spare himself days of painful vomiting, he’ll take it. Appleton’s right: he has to try his luck.

Could it be him, though? He stares at him. He’s blonde, with blue eyes, a thin face, a freckled nose a tad too big for his face. He’s not ugly, nor is he exceptionally handsome; but Jungkook has no idea if he’s the type of man he likes. He didn’t even know he was gay until he looked at Seokjin.

“Hey, how did you know I fancied blokes?”

Jordan (might as well call him by his first name, since they’re apparently going out) shrugs. “I didn’t. I was trying my luck. And I didn’t even drink Felix Felicis! Man, what a brilliant day.” He beams. “Say, can I kiss you?”

“Don’t push it,” Jungkook smiles.

“Alright, alright. Do you want to take a walk around the lake? We can talk. I can tell you more about myself since you forgot me. That okay?”

“Sure,” Jungkook shrugs. “Not now, though. I’m waiting for Jimin and Hoseok.”

“Okay. Let’s meet at the lake in an hour?”

Jungkook nods.

“Great! See you there, Jungkook!” Jordan says. He blows him a kiss with his hand and leaves with a spring in his step. Jungkook shakes his head, amused. Just as Jordan crosses the door to the hall, Jimin and Hoseok come in, walking towards Jungkook and taking the vacated space.

“Appleton looks happy,” Jimin comments, helping himself to tea, milk and sugar. “I don’t like it.”

“We’re dating,” Jungkook says.

The pot of tea slips from Jimin’s hands and crashes on the table, spilling its content everywhere. Jimin doesn’t even pay it any attention. “*WHAT?*”

Hoseok, gawking at him, looks shell-shocked too.

“Clean up your fucking mess, boys,” Jungkook snaps. “There’s tea on the toasts.”

Blinking, barely looking at what he’s doing, Hoseok flicks his wand and nonverbally Vanishes tea, toasts, and pot shards. Jimin hasn’t moved, still looking gobsmacked.

Hoseok is the first one to find his voice back. “What do you mean, you’re dating?”

“I mean, he asked me out and I said yes.”

“That’s what dating is about,” Jimin replies. “The question is, *why?*” Then his eyes widen dramatically. “Oh hell, is it him? Is it him you fancy?”

“Could be. If it is, my problems are over, since he fancies me too. If it isn’t, I’ll know soon enough, when I start vomiting flowers again.”

Jimin gapes. “Merlin. I feel compelled to hope it’s him… but at the same time, I really really hope it isn’t… fuck!”

“Would it be so bad? I mean, he’s a Slytherin, but they’re not monsters.”

“Not all of them, anyway,” Hoseok mutters.

“It’s not the fact that he’s a Slytherin. I mean, it is, a bit. But not really. Seokjin’s friend Yoongi is a Slytherin and he’s a good guy. It’s just—seriously, *Appleton*? That infinite wanker? I can’t believe you’d fall for him.”

“Why not? Because he threw up on you once?”

“*No,* because he’s a pompous twit,” Jimin replies venomously. “He’s selfish, he’s dim, he’s arrogant. Do you want the rest of the list? Because it goes on and on.”

Jungkook blinks. Jordan didn’t seem all that bad a few minutes ago; his childish happiness when Jungkook said yes was rather cute, actually.

“Would you rather it’d be Kim Taehyung instead of him?”

“Kim Taehyung?” Jimin’s eyes look ready to pop out of their sockets. “Why are you even mentioning him?”

Jungkook lowers his eyes, embarrassed. For some reason, he doesn’t want to tell them about their weird encounter in front of the hospital wing, the day before.

“You dislike everyone who’s in Slytherin,” he says instead. “Whoever I was in love with, you won’t like it.”

“Maybe it’s not a Slytherin!” Jimin points out. “You forgot Seokjin too. And Namjoon.”

“They’re the *only* two people I forgot who don’t belong to Slytherin.”

“How would you know? Maybe you just don’t remember the others.”

“It could be Taehyung, though,” Hoseok says in a thoughtful tone. “Why else would you forget Seokjin, his brother, and Namjoon, his cousin?”

“Well then, it could be Yoongi too!” Jimin snaps. “He’s best friends with all of them.”

“Then I’ll be sure to ask him out if it doesn’t work out with Appleton, shall I?” Jungkook retorts, standing up. “I’m just doing what I can to get rid of this fucking curse! And I don’t give a fuck if you think it’s unconventional.”

It’s only when he closes his mouth that he notices how loud he’s talking, and how everyone in the Great Halls is gawping, eyes fixed on him—the infamous Kim Taehyung included. He shakes his head.

“I’m leaving. I have a date with *Jordan.*”

Then he stomps out of the Hall in a bemused silence.

It's definitely you

The date is nothing extraordinary. Jordan might not be everything Jimin said he was, but he's still, quite frankly, a bit dim and overall uninteresting. Jungkook is highly unconvinced about having ever had romantic feelings for the bloke, but after his little row with Jimin, he's well determined to try anyway.

Nothing he tells Jungkook, during their stroll around the lake, is worth knowing, but the weather is nice and the tree leaves are softly quivering in the breeze and the Giant Squid is creating silky ripples at the surface of the Great Lake, and Jungkook is happy to get to live such a beautiful, peaceful day at least one last time before he kicks the bucket.

It would even be enjoyable if he could stop thinking about Jimin for a second.

They're friends since before their first year; of course they argued more than once. Way more, even. Sometimes, it was over in a day; sometimes, they wouldn't talk to each other for a week. (Never more than that, though.) In any other situation, Jungkook wouldn't mind so much; by now, he knows he and Jimin will be friends until their last breath.

Which is precisely the problem here: Jungkook's last breath isn't so far away anymore, and wasting any minute of his remaining life arguing with Jimin doesn't sit right with him.

In the end, to Jordan's disappointment, he cuts the stroll short and heads back to the castle, set on finding his friend and apologising. He doesn't have to go far: Jimin is in the entrance hall, sitting on the marble stairs with his head hidden in his knees, sobbing loudly, while Hoseok gently strokes his back. Jungkook's heart breaks at the sight.

"Jimin," he says, stopping in front of him. "I'm sorry for what I said earlier."

Jimin's head jerks up towards him, and without warning, he throws himself at him and wraps his arms around his neck, crying even louder than before. It's all Jungkook can do not to fall on his back under the sheer force of his friend's hug.

"Jungkookiiiie! I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be so snappy, I swear, I…"

"It's okay, it's okay," Jungkook whispers in his ear, closing his arms around him. "I'm sorry, I was snappy too. But I don't want to argue with you."

"Me neitheeer," Jimin bawls. "You can go out with anyone you want! You can go out with Appleton if you fancy him, it's totally fine with me, I promise, anyone would be fine as long as you don't die, I swear…"

"I know," Jungkook smiles, petting his hair. "I know."

When Jimin stops crying, the three of them, with Hoseok whose hair is a sorrowful grey, slip outside just to lie on the grass in the sun, pointedly ignoring their homework (since, why bother when you're going to die, right?), and it is quite telling, Jungkook thinks, that he's having a much better time with his two best friends than he had earlier with Appleton.

"I don't think I fancy him," he says, eyes closed, voice low, after a long moment spent doing nothing else but listening to the rustling sound of the leaves. "I would have noticed, don't you think?"

He feels Jimin, on his right, wrapping his hand around his wrist to squeeze it affectionately, while Hoseok, on his left, pats his arm.

"Is there anyone else you think you might be in love with, in the school?" Jimin asks. "Someone who makes you feel all dizzy, who gives you a fluttery stomach?"

Jungkook laughs nervously, because the first face that springs to mind is Kim Taehyung's. He wouldn't say his classmate makes him feel dizzy or gives him a fluttery stomach, but Jungkook is intrigued by him for sure. And a bit awed by his incredible beauty.

"Love's weird, don't you think?" he replies instead. "It all but disappears when you forget the person. There is no tangible connection, no actual bond. Love is just the sum of shared memories. Just that. When you lose them, you lose everything."

There is a long silence.

Then:

"Ok, but you didn't reply to my question, though."

Jungkook chuckles.

☆☆☆

Out of duty, Jungkook tries to spend time with Appleton; when he leaves his friends, he goes to find him, and he eats with him at the Slytherin table that evening, so, by Monday morning, everyone in the school knows that they're a couple. Sort of. Jungkook doesn't think the term really fits, but he hasn't had a coughing fit since yesterday, and he's not one to look a gift horse in the mouth. They sit together in Transfiguration, one of the classes they've got in common, and Appleton joins them at the Gryffindor table for lunch, but he leaves earlier because he wants to pop by the library the check something for his next Arithmancy lesson.

As soon as he leaves, Jimin plasters a fake smile on his face.

"What a nice, interesting chap," he says in a taut voice. "How lucky you are to have him."

"Oh, stop it," Jungkook chuckles. "He's as boring as a slice of bread without butter."

“Thank Merlin,” Jimin sighs. “What an insufferable prick, seriously, who the hell in their right mind would fancy him?!”

“You haven’t had a fit since you told him you’d go out with him, though,” Hoseok points out.

“Dumb luck,” Jimin sneers. “Not that I want you to have one, of course,” he adds immediately. “But you’ll never make me believe that this giant twat is the one for you.”

At the other end of the Hall, Kim Taehyung gracefully rises from his seat after his lunch. His black curls fall on his almond-shaped eyes, and he jerks his head irritably to clear his view. Chin in his hand, Jungkook watches him, fascinated. In front of him, Jimin frowns, then turns his head to see what he’s looking at.

“Bloody hell,” he says in a low voice, and Jungkook’s attention immediately snaps back to him. “Talk about being caught between the devil and the deep blue sea.”

Hoseok turns his head too; Kim Taehyung is crossing the Great Hall, books in his hands, stony-faced, and doesn’t look back.

“He’s not that bad, you know?” he tells Jungkook in a serious tone. “Jimin’s still stuck on that time he called you a mudblood or when he cast a Jelly-Legs Jinx at him in first year. But he grew up. He changed.”

“It wasn’t just that,” Jimin grumbles. “He’s an obnoxious arsehole. The fact that he doesn’t openly insult us or jinx us anymore doesn’t change that.”

“It might be him, you know,” Jungkook says softly. “You asked me if I had an inkling of who it could be. Well, he’s my inkling.”

Hoseok and Jimin stare at him, mouths wide open.

“Really?” Jimin whispers. “*Kim Taehyung?*”

Jungkook shrugs. “I don’t know. Maybe I’m wrong—maybe I’m just confused because he’s unnaturally beautiful. Although I think Seokjin’s fit too, mind, but it doesn’t hit quite the same.”

“Shit.” Jimin hides his face in his hands. “Well, you know I’ll support you whatever happens, and if it’s down to Kim Taehyung to save your life, then I’ll be immensely thankful. And I’ll be nice to him. Or at least, I’ll try. But I still won’t like him.”

Jungkook smiles. “Fair enough. I guess we’ll know when I get a new wand, anyway.”

“I Flooed Dad, he’ll be back tomorrow evening. On Wednesday, you will be able to go to Diagon Alley.”

“But I haven’t received money from my parents yet…”

Jimin shrugs. “Dad will probably take you to their place first, he needs their permission to take you to London anyway.”

“Oh. Ok, good.”

Two days.

In two days, he’ll have a new wand, and he’ll know who the hell he was trying so hard to forget.

But for the time being, he goes to his lessons, even if he’s not able to do much besides taking notes. Some of his Gryffindor fellows let him try their wands, but the feeling is never right and his charms are ludicrously weak. He wouldn’t even be able to cast an Expelliarmus to save his life. Wandless spelling is impossibly hard, even with something as simple as *Lumos*. When he thinks back to his childhood, when he could make things levitate or create fire in his palms without even knowing why and how he was doing it, he wonders if it’s not a disservice done to wizards to force them to rely on wands. They do make magic easier to control, but now that he’s deprived of it, Jungkook feels too vulnerable.

The fact that he’s got flowers growing in his body doesn’t help at all; just as he’s beginning to wonder if Appleton could be his cure, that evening, he has a new fit.

It happens when he’s coming back from his last class of the day, Muggle Studies. He’s in a hallway, letting his mind wander, when suddenly, a memory randomly pops up; running through the corridor, the same one he’s in right now, with someone at night, panting and laughing.

He doesn’t even have time to wonder about the person’s identity; searing pain flashes through his whole body, from his hair to his toes, and he falls on all four, retching and coughing, again and again, until there’s a puddle of blood in front of him, and white petals and flowers heads floating in it.

It’s not just painful; it’s exhausting. When his body decides it’s enough for now, he collapses on the floor, conscious, but utterly devoid of energy.

It feels like an eternity later when he hears footsteps further in the hallway; then they stop, and Jungkook closes his eyes.

“Fuck!” a voice shouts. “Fuck! Jungkook, are you ok?”

Someone rushes towards him; he feels a hand on his shoulder, which pushes him gently so he’s lying on his back. With some difficulty, he opens his eyes again; there’s a bloke with mint green hair in front of him. He’s frowning.

Yoongi, Jungkook’s drowsy mind helpfully provides.

“Hiya,” he croaks. The familiar ache is back in his throat, and there’s probably drying blood on his chin, caked on the corner of his lips.

“Hiya, mate. Let’s get you to the hospital wing, yeah? D’you think you can stand up?”

“Sure,” Jungkook whispers, but even sitting up is an ordeal. All he wants to do is lie on the cold stone floor and sleep.

Luckily, Yoongi is very patient. He gives Jungkook time to get his bearings back, Vanishes the puddle of blood and flowers for him, and when Jungkook has rested a bit, he takes his arm and wraps it around his shoulders to help him walk.

“I’m looking into it, yeah?” he says while they’re making their way towards the hospital wing. “It’s bloody hard finding stuff on this curse. But I will, okay?”

“Yeah,” Jungkook mutters. He’s so focused on putting one foot after the other that five minutes go by before he asks his question. “Why, though?”

“What d’you mean, why?”

“Well, we’re not close. Or were we? I can’t remember,” he says, voice hoarse. “Why are you trying to help?”

Yoongi shrugs, which moves Jungkook’s arm and sends a jolt of pain through his body. He grits his teeth. The seventh-year doesn’t notice.

“We’re not close, but we’re not strangers,” he explains. “Seokjin loves you like a brother and he asked me to help, so I’m helping. And Taehyung’s like a caged lion these days.”

Jungkook’s fuzzy brain struggles to understand.

“Kim Taehyung? Why?”

“Well, you know. You’re friends.”

Jungkook blinks. His heart stutters in his chest. “Are we?”

Yoongi turns his head to stare at him, shaking his head. “Ah, right, you forgot. Sorry. Yeah, you are. Or you were, I’m not sure. You used to hang out together, before.”

“W-when?”

“A while ago,” Yoongi replies noncommittally, as the hospital wing door comes in sight. “There we are. Phew! You’re fucking heavy, mate.”

The second they’re in, Pomfrey starts fussing over him and Yoongi slips away after a last pat on his shoulder, to Jungkook’s great displeasure; he wanted to ask him more about Taehyung. About being Taehyung’s *friend.* On one hand, it explains why he was lurking around the hospital wing’s door the last time he was here. On the other, he didn’t look very friendly that day—nor any other day Jungkook saw him.

Pomfrey works miracles: half an hour later, he’s leaving the infirmary, with a sleep potion in his pocket for the night, his throat healed, feeling his usual self again—exhausted, for sure, but able to walk normally, at least. He needs to find Yoongi, or Taehyung himself, but first, he needs to find Appleton.

It’s a bit early for dinner; of course, his ‘boyfriend’ isn’t in the Great Hall. He thinks about going to the Slytherin common room, but he doesn’t know—or remember, if ever knew—

where that is.

Finally, he discovers Appleton doing his homework in the library. The boy grins when he sees him.

“Jungkook! Alright, baby?” he whispers.

Baby. Jungkook tries to hide the way he cringes, but he’s not very successful.

“Peachy,” he replies in a low voice too, so as not to disturb the other students. “Do you have a second? Is it okay if we chat a bit outside?”

“Sure!” Still beaming, Appleton follows him into the hallway, where they don’t have to keep their voice down anymore. “I looked for you after class! We said we’d meet in front of the big staircase. Where were you?”

“In the hospital wing, because I threw up flowers,” Jungkook replies matter-of-factly. Maybe it’s a bit selfish, but life, *his* life, in particular, is too short to waste on someone he doesn’t want to spend time with, someone he doesn’t even like. “Which is why I’m breaking up with you. I’m sorry, you’re not the one I love.”

All joy immediately leaves Appleton’s face, replaced by stupefaction, incredulity, and something Jungkook wasn’t expecting to see: anger.

“Fuck you!” Appleton explodes. “You fucking cunt!”

Jungkook startles, so shocked by the sudden outburst that he has no idea how to react. What happened to *going their merry way?* He doesn’t look all that merry, right now. In fact, he looks downright ugly, face contorted, disgust and jealousy etched in his features.

“What’s the matter with you?” Jungkook finally says, frowning. “I told you it might not work. You were fine with it.”

“Fine? Yeah, right!” Appleton scoffs, before shaking his head and letting out a crazy laugh. “Fuck, this is so stupid. I shot myself in the foot, there, didn’t I? Well, guess what, Jungkook: if you’re waiting for your Prince Charming to come and save you from the big bad curse, better forget it right now, because he’ll never love you!”

“*What?*” Jungkook stares at him, eyes wide. “Who?!”

“Oh yeah, you’d like to know, wouldn’t you?” Appleton sneers. “I could have saved you, you know, if you’d loved me. But no, no one else but this twat for you, heh?”

“*Who the fuck are you talking about?”*

Appleton shrugs, a vicious smile playing on his lips. “Would you like some hints? Okay, I’ll give you three. One: fuck you. Two: fuck you,” he says, counting on his fingers, folding them in until his middle finger is the only one left outstretched. “Do you want the third, too? Fuck you!”

When he turns to leave, Jungkook grabs his hand, but Appleton immediately draws his wand and points it at Jungkook.

“What are you going to do? Stop me? You can’t even do *magic.* You’re useless!”

“Just tell me who it is!” Jungkook shouts, shaking with rage.

“Why? It wouldn’t change anything anyway. He doesn’t love you.”

But at least, I’d know, Jungkook thinks. There’s nothing to do: even if he had a perfectly functional wand, he wouldn’t be able to coerce Appleton into telling him the truth. So he lets him go, fury burning white in his gut. As he watches him walk away, he still lifts his hand, thinking about wandlessly jinxing him, if that would even work, but he’s a fucking Gryffindor; it’s not in his nature to attack someone from behind, even someone as despicable as Appleton.

He shakes his head and lowers his hand. Fuck. He needs to find Jimin and Hoseok. Still shaking, he turns away and leaves, mind running at full speed.

Who was Appleton talking about? How would he even know?

Could it be Kim Taehyung?

Just as he’s wondering about it, hastily making his way towards the Hufflepuff common room, Kim Taehyung himself, in the flesh, appears in front of him, hurtling past the corner of the hallway at full speed, just like the first time they met—that Jungkook remembers.

This time, he manages to avoid crashing into him by stepping on the side, but they both lose balance, too surprised to see someone suddenly appear in front of them, and grab each other’s hands to stop themselves from falling.

“Jungkook!” Kim Taehyung exclaims, looking very surprised.

“Why are you *always* walking so fast?” Jungkook complains, though his anger immediately ebbs away at his classmate’s sight. “How many people have you knocked over these past few years? You’re a walking danger. You should walk around with flashy yellow signs around you.”

“Why do you walk so close to the wall?” Kim Taehyung counters, an impish spark in his dark almond eyes. “Walk in the middle, like everyone! Merlin knows there’s enough space.”

Jungkook chuckles; it’s only then, at this moment, that he notices he’s still holding Taehyung’s hands. He looks down at them. They’re big, his fingers long and delicate, with beautifully shaped nails. They look so pretty, wrapped around his own. *Why is he so perfect?* Jungkook can’t help thinking.

“Hey, Taehyung… It was you, right? I’m sure it was you. It has to be you.”

Maybe he shouldn’t have said that, because Taehyung jerks his hands away from his, gaze suddenly stony. It makes Jungkook feel unbearably empty.

“It wasn’t me,” Taehyung says. “We already talked about this.”

“How do you know? Maybe I was never brave enough to confess to you.”

An expression of ineffable sadness crosses Taehyung’s face.

“I do know,” he whispers. “It’s not me, Jungkook. You’re in love with someone else.”

“Fuck!” Jungkook swears. “Who the fuck is it if it’s not you?!”

For a moment, they don’t say anything and just look at each other. Jungkook could stare at his face for hours. His beautiful eyes, his soft-looking lips, the slope of his nose, his moles, his skin. He wants to kiss his neck. He wants to fill his damaged lungs with the scent of his delicate perfume.

It has to be you, he thinks but doesn’t say, this time.

“Dunno. Maybe your boyfriend?” Taehyung replies instead. There’s something steely in his gaze.

Jungkook can’t help but chuckle, although the situation is all but funny. “That ship has sailed. In a puddle of blood, an hour ago in the west wing’s fifth-floor corridor.”

“What? You… You had another fit?” Taehyung asks, stunned.

“Yeah. It was bound to happen anyway. We broke up.”

Taehyung gawks at him, for a moment, until he finally whispers, “I’m sorry.”

“About Appleton? Merlin, don’t be. He’s an arsehole.”

“I could have told you that,” Taehyung replies. “I’m sorry about the curse.”

“Ah, yes. Well, nothing to do about it… if you’re sure it’s not you.”

It’s a test, one last test, because he finds it hard to believe he’s wrong about this, but Taehyung’s face immediately hardens.

“It isn’t.” His tone is definitive. Almost dry.

“Alright,” Jungkook sighs. “Do tell me this, at least. Yoongi said we were friends. Were we really?”

Taehyung looks down. Jungkook watches him, riveted.

“Yeah,” he finally replies. “We were friends… for a while.”

“For a while? What happened?” Jungkook asks, frowning.

Taehyung shrugs. “Life happened.”

Why do wizards always feel the need to be so mysterious about what they know? Jungkook thinks, irritated. Merlin forbids they ever speak clearly once in their life!

It doesn't matter, anyway. Soon, he's getting a new wand, and he'll remember everything.

And if Taehyung, for whatever reason, is lying about this, he'll be very, very cross.

Soon.

☆☆☆

Sooner than expected, even, Jungkook realises the next morning, when he sits next to Jimin for breakfast.

"Dad Flooed me this morning," he says by way of greetings, his mouth full of cornflakes. "He's coming back around noon, and you're going to London this afternoon. He didn't want to wait any longer after what happened to you yesterday evening."

Of course, Jungkook had told him, after his encounter with Taehyung, what had transpired with Appleton, and of course, Jimin had been absolutely scandalised. *He knows who might cure you and won't tell you?! That little piece of shit!! Wait, I'll tell Dad! A bit of Veritaserum and he'll spill everything he's hiding!!* And Hoseok had sighed, saying: *That's illegal, though.* In the end, Jimin was so enraged it had taken them the whole evening to calm him down.

(He hasn't told him about Taehyung, though. It felt strangely too private.)

"Brilliant!" Jungkook exclaims, thrilled. Living without his memories is as complicated as living without his wand. He needs both back.

"He told me you'd still need to go to your morning class," Jimin adds. "But it's Potions, right? So you'll be able to do a bit of magic."

Oh. Potions. With Kim Taehyung, great—with Jordan Appleton, less great. He doesn't know if he's excited or anxious about it.

"And tonight," Jimin says, "we'll try to reverse the curse."

Jungkook nods, his heart in his throat. "Are we completely sure this is the right thing to do?" he can't help but ask.

"We are," Jimin replies firmly. "The memory charm is pointless if you keep throwing up flowers. You tried and it didn't work. Time to try something else. Believe me, this is the right thing."

"Right. Okay."

Still, he has good reasons to be nervous, Jungkook thinks when he takes the stairs down to the dungeons for his Potions class. He's a bit late; everyone is here already, taking their stuff out of their bags. Jungkook glances at Taehyung, in his usual seat, and at Appleton, on the other side of the aisle, at the table Jungkook shared with him a few days ago.

"Alright, kids!" Professor Dillingus exclaims in a happy voice. "We're pairing up today as well. The truth serum you brew last Friday was perfectly acceptable and would have become very effective given a month of maturation. I'm proud of you. Today, we're trying something else, and we shall see how well you do this time. Mr Jeon, come in, come in! How are you feeling?"

All heads turn towards Jungkook, including Kim Taehyung's, who is eyeing him curiously, and Appleton's, who throws him a hateful glare.

"I'm fine, thank you," Jungkook replies.

"I'm glad to hear that. Now come in and find yourself a partner. As I said, you're working in pairs today."

Of course, Jungkook can't go to Appleton, who's already turning towards the third Slytherin student in the class; so he puts his bag next to Taehyung, who looks up at him with a gobsmacked expression.

"Mind being my partner?" Jungkook smiles.

It takes Taehyung a long time to reply; by the time he finally does, everyone else is already paired up.

"Sure," he whispers. He looks embarrassed, maybe because of what Jungkook said the day before, but Jungkook doesn't mind. In fact, he's thrilled.

Up to the point, at least, the Professor says: "Today, you'll be brewing Amortentia. It's a requirement for your N.E.W.T.s., as you well know, so pay attention."

Jungkook glances at Taehyung, who has his eyes fixed right ahead of him and his brow set. Maybe he didn't pick the best day to pair up with him.

But, in the end, it's not that bad. Taehyung doesn't say much, but strangely enough, Jungkook doesn't need words to fall into a comfortable rhythm with him. He goes to fetch the ingredients while Taehyung writes the instructions, all the while trying to avoid the spiteful looks Appleton throws his way, and then, they start working on the potion, Jungkook heating the base water and managing the fire while Taehyung cuts the ingredients, a role they assume naturally, as if used to working like that.

And maybe they are, Jungkook thinks, heart racing in his chest, when he grabs the list of instructions and discovers Taehyung's beautiful cursive.

It *is* him, then. He's the one who made past-Jungkook laugh with his impersonations. He's the one who gifted him a notebook to *doodle his heart out.* Of course, Taehyung told him

they used to be friends, so it might just have been because of that, but Jungkook remembers the way he had a fit after discovering the words written on the first page. There is no way this is just a coincidence.

It is you, he thinks fiercely, taking quick peeks at him from the corner of his eye. He looks so serious, handling the silver knife, so beautiful, Jungkook's heart constricts.

They're a good team, the both of them. In no time, their potion turns a lovely pale pink, before morphing into a pearly white. Irresistible aromas start floating around. Jungkook smells rain on dry ground, the wooden scent of his broomstick, and the last one, the most powerful, is a delicate perfume—one he can smell on his lab partner right now, that he could smell since the first day they bumped into each other in a corridor.

He doesn't say anything, this time, though. Taehyung has made it clear he doesn't want to talk about it, and Jungkook won't have to wait much longer to have the final answer anyway.

But I know it's you, he thinks anyway.

Vinewood and dragon heartstring

He’s eating in the Great Hall with Jimin and Hoseok, wondering when the Headmaster will come to take him to London, when someone, an adult Jungkook doesn’t recognise, stops next to him.

“Professor Park is requesting your presence in the Astronomy tower, Jeon,” says the man in a haughty tone, eyes as cold as a winter storm. “Do not make him wait. Do you understand?”

Jungkook blinks. The man looks like he would love to spit on his face, which is a bit strange, given that he’s not one of Jungkook’s teachers. That he remembers, at least.

“Yes,” he replies, a bit puzzled.

“Yes, *sir,*” the man snaps.

“Yes, sir,” Jungkook says, baffled.

Once he’s satisfied, the man walks away, but Jungkook catches him glaring at Seokjin, who’s sitting a bit further away.

“Who’s this lovely, pleasant fellow?” he asks his friends in a low voice.

“Meet our Astronomy teacher,” Hoseok sighs. “Seokjin and Taehyung’s father, Professor Kim. An absolute ray of sunshine, as you can see.”

“He’s the reason you dropped Astronomy at the beginning of the year,” Jimin adds. “You loved the subject, but kept getting bad grades because that piece of shit hated you. Still does, it seems.”

“Is there a reason for that?” Jungkook can’t help but ask. “Did I kick his baby hippogriff or something?”

Jimin rolls his eyes. “No other reason than you being born to non-magic parents—even if he’ll never admit it out loud, because he doesn’t want to get sacked. It’s obvious, though. He treats all muggle-born students the same way. No wonder Taehyung turned out to be such an arsehole.”

Taehyung’s not an arsehole, Jungkook thinks immediately. But he doesn’t have time to get into that, because Jimin’s father is expecting him—unless Professor Kim is just trying to make him run to the other side of the castle for nothing.

“Ok, I’m going. See you later.”

“Choose your wand well!” Hoseok exclaims. “We need you to get your memories back.”

“It’ll choose me,” Jungkook smiles. He’s almost as excited as he was six years ago, when he stepped foot into Ollivander’s for the first time.

Now, it’s going to be the last.

Professor Kim wasn’t pulling his leg; the Headmaster is waiting for him at the top of the Astronomy tower, a worried expression on his face, his high figure casting a stark shadow on the wooden floor bathed in sunlight.

“Jungkook, my boy! How are you feeling?” he exclaims. “Jimin explained everything to me when he Flooed. Why didn’t you tell me about it earlier?”

“I’m sorry, sir,” Jungkook replies, guilt creeping in at the thought of disappointing someone he likes and respects as much as Jimin’s father. “I didn’t want to be forcefully sent to St Mungo’s and have my feelings removed…”

“I would never do that! Nor would St Mungo’s do something so life-altering without getting your consent first.”

“Yes, but I wasn’t sure,” Jungkook smiles. “There wasn’t much in the only book we found about the curse.”

“Yes, Jimin told me.” The Headmaster’s look turns sorrowful. “My dear boy… When we get back, I’ll assure you, I’ll do everything to find out who the caster of this terrible curse is, and they’ll pay for it.”

“Thanks, Headmaster,” Jungkook nods. “Are we going to see my parents first? I don’t have any money.”

“Yes! Yes, let’s get on with it.” Mr Park holds out his arm. “Take my hand. Our esteemed Professor Flitwick turned off the anti-Apparition ward in this area, especially for us. We’ll Side-Along Apparate to your parents’ house, then to London. I sent them a letter yesterday by express owl, so they should be expecting our visit. Are you ready?”

Jungkook acquiesces, excited about seeing his parents again, even if just for a short time. For some reason he now can’t remember, he elected to stay in the castle for the Christmas holidays, when he didn’t know yet he was going to die so soon. The last time he saw them, it was on his birthday, and they were waving goodbye on the platform 9¾. Jungkook could never have guessed, then, that it would be the last time they would ever do that.

“Mr Park,” he says, without taking the offered hand yet. “You won’t tell them, right? You won’t tell them I’m dying?”

Merlin, but he hopes he won’t have a fit in front of them.

“I won’t, Jungkook, if you don’t want me to,” Jimin’s father replies in a grave tone. “And you’re not dying. I’ll do anything I can to ensure it won’t come to this.”

I don't see how, Jungkook thinks, *unless you can make Taehyung love me.* Could an Amortentia potion be the solution to all his problems? Probably not, he thinks. Nothing's ever as easy.

When he takes Mr Park's hand, the Headmaster looks at him with a grave expression. "We'll Apparate a bit further away from your parents' house. Most people throw up when they Apparate for the first time, see, and it could trigger your flowers. I'm sure you wouldn't want your parents to see that."

"Good thinking," Jungkook approves.

Apparating is something he's always dreamt of doing since he first learnt about the existence of wizards. Muggles have their own magic, he's firmly convinced of that; the telly, the radio, the Internet, are things that sorely lack in the magical world, and Jungkook always dreamt of finding a job that would allow him to bring the best muggle inventions into wizarding households—but *Apparating* is the one 'superpower' he wished he could have as a child, the ability to transport himself to another location in the blink of an eye.

Maybe he won't ever be able to bring the Internet to wizards, given his actual life expectancy, but at least, he'll Apparate before he dies.

Or maybe he'll die *because* he Apparated, he thinks when he lands in a barley field and falls on his hands and knees to puke, after experiencing what must be the second-worst sensation in the world—feeling his body stretch in all directions at once, further than the laws of physics would normally allow.

Luckily, it's regular vomiting, so he doesn't need to suffer through the first worst sensation in the world right after the second; his lunch gets reacquainted with the outside world, but the flowers stay inside, hiding in the warmth of his lungs.

"Alright, Jungkook?" Jimin's father asks, sounding worried.

"Y-yeah," he stammers, getting back up and wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "Yeah, I'm good. I'm alright."

He used to hate throwing up, when he was younger; now, he's fascinated to see how easy it is compared to what the curse provokes in him. He feels fine; there's no blood, no pain, he's still conscious, he doesn't feel weak, and he can perfectly walk.

The flowers are taking away a bit of his vital force with them each time, he understands finally. Each petal contains a bit of his life. That's why it's so hard. And one day, even with the help of Pomfrey's potions, he won't have any left at all.

He shakes his head and tries not to think about it. "Let's go."

It's harder than he thought it would be to walk up the flagstone path that leads to the door of his childhood house. All he can think about is that it's probably the last time he'll see his parents—and that they absolutely *cannot* know. They wouldn't understand; who wants to hear that their kid is dying because of a love curse? They would end up resenting magic and

wizards, and Jungkook can't stand the idea of his beloved parents turning on his beloved friends.

So he plasters a brave smile on his lips and knocks on the door.

"Mum! Dad! It's me!"

He doesn't have to wait five seconds before the door opens and both his parents' cheerful faces appear behind it.

"Jungkook!"

It's hard for them, he knows. They didn't expect to have their son taken away from them at such a young age. After Jungkook left for school, the Headmaster introduced them to a witch living in their town, who was kind enough to explain at length what Hogwarts was, and how the magical world worked, and it helped them a lot—still, Jungkook knows how much they miss him, so he makes a point, every year, of spending most of his summer time with them, sometimes even bringing them with him to Jimin's parents' house in Cornwall. Which means, of course, they're also enchanted to see Mr Park, whom they know very well by now.

Naturally, they prepared snacks. Jungkook, whose lunch was cut short and whose mouth tastes foul after the spewing, wolfs down the food his parents made, leaving it to Mr Park to explain in detail the reason for their visit.

"So, Jungkook put his wand too close to the fireplace and it cracked…"

Of course, his mother chides him for not taking care of his belongings, and his father scolds him for being rude and eating first without even offering a plate to their guest, but it makes him smile.

Merlin, please, I want to live, he thinks for the umpteenth time. He should really look into that Amortentia idea when he gets back to the castle. Maybe Taehyung would agree to help him, and drink it until he's cured. Or would the flowers grow back if Taehyung's fake love suddenly stopped?

It reminds him of their main purpose: Diagon Alley. As pleasant as this is, he can't stay here forever.

"What? Jungkook, you're leaving already?" his mother asks in dismay.

"I'm sorry, Mum," Jungkook nods. "I need to get a new wand so I can go back to class as soon as possible and make up for what I missed."

Of course, his parents are disappointed, but he promises he'll see them very soon (*lies*) and that they'll spend a great summer together (*more lies*). He even manages to take a short trip to the bathroom to brush his teeth and take one last look at his house, his childhood bedroom, before hugging his parents for the very last time.

"I love you, Mum. I love you, Dad."

This isn't something he's used to saying, and his parents look surprised but delighted. If he lives through this, he thinks, he'll tell them he loves them so much more often.

If, if, if.

Trying not to linger over the fact that all these 'ifs' solely depend on Taehyung's capacity to feel love for him, he grabs the arm Mr Park is offering to him, and then, they're gone.

He doesn't puke, this time, but the feeling is unpleasant enough to distract him from the fact that he's never going to see his family again. When he straightens up, though, he's amazed to see Diagon Alley like he's never seen it: its white stone buildings shining under the May sun, its paved streets free from the throng of students trying to get into the shops to get their books and quills and wands, with only a few wizards strolling and stopping in front of the shop windows to admire something. Birds are happily chirping on the slate roofs. It's quiet and beautiful, and it makes Jungkook's heart ache once again at the idea of everything he'll be leaving behind him.

What will Jimin and Hoseok think, this summer, when they'll come here, Jimin to get his things, Hoseok to accompany him since he won't be returning to Hogwarts, and Jungkook won't be there with them, laughing and buying items they don't need, before stopping at Frida Fortescue's ice cream parlour? Jungkook can't think about it; it's making him sick. His friends will be devastated.

He needs a wand.

After trading the Muggle money his parents gave him for gold Galleons, he heads to Ollivander's, the Headmaster walking by his side. The shop smells like incense and wood and beeswax; the sun is shining through the perfectly cleaned windows, outlining light squares on the polished wooden floor. A woman with glacier blue eyes and blond hair comes out from behind a shelf when she hears the bell ringing; the same woman that sold him his very first wand. Jimin explained to him, when he came here for the first time, that many shop owners died during the war against Voldemort. Some had children to pick up the torch, like Ollivander and Fortescue; some didn't, and their business was replaced by something else. Jungkook often wondered what it must have been like for those who lived during such times, like Hermione Granger. Whenever asked, Mr Park always replied that those were very dark times and that they were lucky to live in peace—he would never say more, because he didn't want to give them nightmares.

Adults, Jungkook noticed over time, never liked talking about the war. Death must have been such a common occurrence, back then.

"May I help you?" the witch asks, forcing Jungkook's attention to snap back to the present.

"Yes, hello," he replies with an uncertain smile. "I would like to buy a wand to replace mine."

"What happened to it?" the witch frowns. "Were you not happy with it?"

“It broke,” Jungkook explains. “I put it too close to… Oh, hell, whatever. I cast a negative intent charm at myself and it cracked.”

Ms Ollivander blinks. “What kind of charm? Were you trying to harm yourself?”

“It was a memory charm, and I was trying to cure myself, actually.”

The witch looks like she’s dying to know more, but she merely asks: “Unicorn hair core?”

Jungkook nods. “Yes. Can you provide me with a new one?”

“Of course,” she replies easily. “I might have been able to repair your old one, depending on the spell used, but unicorn hair wands are different. Turning on their owner really does a number on them, see. They’re so loyal, it traumatises them. Better we get you a brand new one. Give me a second, I’ll bring some out for you to try.”

The process is arduous, even more so than Jungkook remembers it being when he was eleven, to the point he’s wondering if, not unlike the *One True Love,* maybe there exists a One True Wand for wizards, the perfect wand, unique in the world, destined to him—and, like a fool, he broke it.

He can’t help but feel sad for it, the faithful companion of his wizarding debut, broken and traumatised, and all for nothing.

But when, half an hour later, the lady opens the forty-second (*forty-second*) box and Jungkook takes a look at the wand resting on its purple velvet cushion, he suddenly feels a gush of magic wrap around him, making his arm hairs stand on end. The wand is almost glowing. A shower of white sparks bursts from the end, like fireworks—and he’s not even *holding it*.

Tentatively, he picks up the wand from its box. It’s very pretty, the wood a light golden colour, with beautiful carvings around it. When he closes his fingers around it, he can clearly sense how happy the wand is to be his, to have found him. It lets out another burst of happy sparks.

He wants to try and reverse the memory charm right away, but he knows he needs to do it with Jimin and Hoseok, to make up for doing it alone the last time. Instead, he Accios a book left on a chair next to the shop window, to test out the new wand. He doesn’t even need to enunciate the spell out loud; he just *thinks* it and the wand, eager to please, sends the book flying in the air and puts it delicately in his other hand.

Merlin, it feels good. Not only to be able to perform magic again, but also to perform it so easily.

The witch nods approvingly. “Excellent! Vinewood and dragon heartstring. A powerful wand. Vinewood wands are typically drawn to wizards with a vision, who think outside the box. They’re so sensitive, they usually can detect if a wizard they think is a good match is close, and they make themselves known. It’s lucky we opened this box and saw it. This wand will help you achieve your greatest projects.”

Jimin's father is beaming. "That's fantastic, Jungkook! Perfect!"

Jungkook smiles, but there's a knot in his stomach. He has a vision, muggles and wizards unity, and he has a project, to bring his two worlds together—but what he lacks is time. He feels almost sad for his new wand, knowing he will, in all likelihood, abandon it very soon.

Still, it's progress; he's now only one step away from discovering why his past self was adamant he was condemned without the memory charm—one step away from unveiling the mystery that surrounds his whole life, and imminent death.

☆☆☆

By the time he's back and sitting cross-legged on his bed with his two friends at the other end, in his thankfully empty bedroom (it's dinnertime, which they're all skipping, obviously—this takes precedence), he's shaking with nerves.

"Are we really, *really* sure it's a good idea?" he asks again, voice tense, fingers trembling on his brand new wand. "What if I mess up again?"

"This isn't a negative intent charm, so it won't do anything to the wand, at any rate," Hoseok says, with his hair a happy peach colour to encourage Jungkook. "As for the rest, don't you think it's better to remember everything?"

Jungkook shrugs, defeated. "I'm sure it's Taehyung anyway."

"You are?" Jimin says, eyes widening. "What makes you say that?"

"It's him. It has to be." It's hard to explain why, since he doesn't have access to his memories, and doing so feels unpleasant, in a way. Too intimate to be shared, even with his closest friends.

Jimin and Hoseok share a bemused look.

"Two days ago, you had no idea who it could be."

"Yeah, but then I talked to him, and I partnered up with him in Potions, and, oh yeah, I smelled his perfume in the Amortentia. How's that for proof?"

"Pretty definitive," Hoseok agrees. "Have you tried talking to him?"

"Yes, and he doesn't even want to hear about it. He has this closed-off expression every time I try to imply I might be in love with him."

"You tried to confess?" Jimin repeats, mouth agape. "Why didn't you tell us about it?"

Jungkook sighs. "I didn't want to talk to you about Taehyung. You hate him."

“I… I don’t…”

“You do. I’m sorry, Jimin, but it’s him. I love Kim Taehyung.” Just as he says that, a hiccup escapes him, and a petal falls delicately on the bed. “There. See?”

Jimin and Hoseok stare at the innocent white petal as if it were a dangerous insect.

“Then there’s no reason to delay the reversing charm anymore,” Hoseok says firmly. “You’ll make sure it’s him and confess your feelings for good. Make him listen to you.”

“But see, that’s what’s scaring me. I know myself. Why wouldn’t I have confessed to Taehyung before? Why did I feel the memory charm was the only way? Besides, he said that we used to be friends.”

“What?” Jimin gapes. “When? Who said that? You were never friends with Taehyung!”

“He told me himself that we were. And Yoongi told me the same thing before him. Hell, you saw the bloody notes in the notebook! It was his writing.” Jimin and Hoseok are gawking, but Jungkook doesn’t pay them any attention. “So, what I’m thinking is, maybe I *already* confessed to him and he said no and it ended our friendship. Why else would it be over?”

“Maybe because you realised he’s an arse?” Jimin mutters. Seeing Jungkook glaring at him, he raises his hands, palms open. “Alright, I’ll stop. No more badmouthing Kim Taehyung.”

“Thank you.”

“It’s a possibility,” Hoseok admits. “Maybe he rejected you. Blimey, I hope you’re wrong, though.”

“So do I,” Jimin says, “but rejection or not, knowing is better than wondering, right?”

“I suppose.” Jungkook's shoulders deflate. “Bloody curse.”

“Dad’s investigating that, by the way. Whoever cursed you, he’ll find them and make sure they spend the rest of their life in Azkaban. And if you die, I’ll kill them myself.”

The worst thing is that he looks deadly serious. Jungkook sighs.

“Let’s talk about this later. Should I do this?”

“Yes,” Hoseok says softly. “Do it.”

“Ok. Ok, let’s do it.”

He points the wand at his temple. His hand is shaking so hard that he has to put the tip against his skin to stop it from moving. He takes a look at his friends, who are watching him with rapt attention, expressions oscillating between sadness and worry.

Inhale. Exhale. Inhale.

It won't change much, anyway—he knows it won't. Might as well go and be done with it.

He closes his eyes.

"*Memoriam*!"

There's a blinding flash that he sees even behind his closed eyelids—or maybe the flash is in his mind. He doesn't know. Suddenly, there's light in compartments of his brain that were plunged into darkness, like a sun illuminating every meandering of his grey matter. Memories, dozens, hundreds, thousands of them, submerge him like a raging tsunami, everything falling back into place with a tangible *click.*

Oh. There it is. The whole story.

Oh.

His friends are watching him with wide eyes.

"Well?" Hoseok asks.

Jungkook opens his mouth—but before he has time to say anything, pain, the sort he's getting familiar with, shoots through his lungs, his whole body, and he barely has time to lean away from the bed before he's expelling petals first, then full flower heads drenched in blood, throat spasming to let them through.

And he gets it, now. He understands. He'll keep coughing up flowers until he dies, because there is no salvation for him.

"Shit!" he hears Jimin say.

The fit won't stop. It's the worst one he's ever experienced. His throat is throbbing, his lungs are on fire, his hands are shaking, but he keeps going, until the last one, finally—one last flower.

It has a full stem.

With thorns on it.

Head spinning, ears ringing, gurgling on his own blood, he collapses on the bed. Black spots are dancing in his vision and he knows he'll pass out. His friends will worry.

It's him, he wants to say to them. *It's Kim Taehyung.*

But if he tells them, then, he'll also have to tell them that there isn't a single doubt anymore: he's condemned to die, no matter what, because he now knows for a fact that Kim Taehyung doesn't love him back.

Because he's already confessed to him, and they did go out together, for a while.

And then, Taehyung broke up with him.

Sea of memories

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

2008

Jungkook loves Hogwarts. He has an amazing friend, Jimin, he loves his Gryffindor House, the castle is incredible, he can do *magic* (or he will soon, when he's learnt to cast some spells) and he's the happiest he's ever been.

His only problem is Kim Taehyung. Jungkook, a kind soul, has never really hated anyone, until now, but he hates Kim Taehyung with a passion. He's arrogant, contemptuous, and thinks he's better than anyone because his father is the Astronomy professor (although Jimin's father is the *Headmaster* and you never hear him brag about *that*) and because they're a family of purebloods: wizards for generations.

Which means, as Jungkook soon learnt, that in their eyes, people like him, born to non-magic folks, are about as valuable as the caterpillars he slices in his Potions class. Kim Taehyung makes sure to remind him of that every time he sees him.

Jungkook isn't the violent type—he's too shy and too sweet to even think about hitting one of his classmates—or cursing him, since this is also an option, now. So, if he wants his revenge, there's only one way to go about it: be better than Kim Taehyung in every subject and drive him mad with anger and jealousy.

And that's what he does, like Hermione Granger did before him (Jimin gave him her biography. He's a fan). He's already naturally talented, Jimin tells him so, but that's not nearly enough: he works, a lot. He works on his charms, he works on his flying on broomsticks, he spends all his free time studying and trying to understand the wizarding world. Not being born in it gives him an unexpected advantage: he doesn't take anything for granted, unlike the kids coming from wizarding families who think they'll ace every exam without even trying.

Spoiler: they don't. Jungkook does. He gets the best grades out of his whole year, and the professors love him—Professor Kim excepted, of course, who's blind with rage that his own son lost to a *muggle-born*. Jungkook is lucky Professor Kim wasn't the one grading the Astronomy final exam. He'd consistently given him Poor or Troll marks at every test all year-long; Jungkook gets an Outstanding at the final exam.

The next year, he tries out for the Gryffindor Quidditch team and scores five out of five goals, while the second-best to try out scores three out of five, which allows him to get the vacant Chaser position. He *loves* playing Quidditch, and he's good at it, and his team loves him, and

his fellow Gryffindors love him—in fact, everybody loves him, except Kim Taehyung and the Slytherins. But he doesn't mind; he's still better than them in every compartment of his school life. Let them be jealous. For the second time, he finishes top of the year, while Gryffindor wins the House Cup thanks to their stellar Quidditch season.

The third and four years go quite the same way, except hormones start acting up and Jungkook finds himself staring more often than not at his classmates' lovely buttocks—especially his male classmates. The magical world doesn't seem to have a problem with homosexuality, and during their fourth year, Jimin starts dating Jung Hoseok, an adorable metamorphmagus a year above them; still, Jungkook doesn't tell a soul. It's not like he fancies anyone, anyway. Unless you count Seokjin, Kim Taehyung's big brother, for a *very* brief period. It might be admiration, too, for how he decided to cut ties with his racist family, or it might be that Seokjin, with his motherly instincts, completely dotes on Jungkook, who loves the attention: anyway, Jungkook thinks for a moment he might fancy him, up until the day Seokjin finds himself a Ravenclaw girlfriend. And when Jungkook only feels happy for him, he realises how wrong he was.

No, love is what he starts feeling, during his fifth year, for his *mortal enemy* Kim Taehyung.

Truth be told, he doesn't hate him as much as he used to, now. In third year, Taehyung started reconnecting with Seokjin, who dearly missed his beloved little brother and kept trying to explain to him, at length (and behind his father's back, of course), how wrong and outdated blood purity was; and some of it must have stuck in Taehyung's mind, since the consequence of their reconciliation was that he suddenly became less of an arsehole. He's still all-around unpleasant, always scowling, cold as an ice cube, probably jealous of Jungkook who's still better than him in class, and who became something of a legend (at least, to his Gryffindor mates) when he turned down a Prefect position to focus on his studies and Quidditch—a position that Taehyung, for his part, accepted. But he doesn't insult him anymore, he doesn't jinx him, he doesn't even use his newfound status to take House points from him, and it's enough for Jungkook's resentment to abate.

And when it does, he notices something he hadn't quite noticed yet: Kim Taehyung is stunningly beautiful.

At this, he's better than Jungkook: his black locks are always artfully tousled, he knows which side is his best, and he knows how to look like a model when he walks through the Great Hall. He knows that he attracts the attention of others and basks in it; he's a Venus flytrap of a man, and Jungkook is but one of the poor flies that get caught in it.

The Yule Ball is what does him in; he's absolutely unable to tear his eyes away from Taehyung, who's wearing beautifully cut moss-green dress robes, ebony curls framing his perfect face. Even Jimin being barfed on by a very drunk Jordan Appleton doesn't manage to distract him from Taehyung's breathtaking figure. And did he put on *makeup*? He looks glowing. Jungkook is dazzled.

But he's also very angry at himself, angry for fancying Kim Taehyung, King of Twats, so he's careful about keeping his feelings under lock and key.

In sixth year, he elects to continue Potions, his favourite subject, while Jimin happily drops it; consequently, he loses his usual partner and is paired, during the first lesson, with Kim Taehyung himself.

Jungkook's heart races in his chest during the two hours. Contrary to what he expected, he and Taehyung make a good team; Taehyung lets Jungkook tell him how to hold the wooden spoon to stir the right way, and Jungkook lets Taehyung correct him when he uses too much wormwood powder; out of the rest of their class, they get the best result with their potion, and Professor Dillingus calls them the *Dream Team.*

They pair up every time after that, and to his great astonishment, Jungkook discovers that Taehyung isn't such a prat. In fact, he's quite funny, when he wants to be, and he does the best impersonations, which have Jungkook howling with laughter.

They become friends. Incredibly good friends, but also secret friends. Jimin still hates Taehyung, and Jungkook doesn't want to expose his new mate to his best friend's vitriol; Taehyung, for his part, profusely apologises for his past conduct to Jungkook, but he still doesn't want his father to know that he's befriended a muggle-born—worst, *the* muggle-born that bests him at every test.

Their rivalry is well-known within the school, so it's not hard to fool everyone else. When they pass each other in the hallway, they glare daggers at each other, sometimes spitting snide remarks, Taehyung threatening to take points from Gryffindor; but in Potions, they sit together and leave notes and doodles in the other's notebooks, and every day, they secretly meet in the library or in some abandoned classroom to spend time together. Jungkook does realise he's falling in love, deeply, irrevocably, but he's unable to do anything to stop it. It's a very bad idea, loving Kim Taehyung, but Jungkook's heart swells with the sheer amount of adoration he feels for him, until the day he physically can't stop himself from letting this inconvenient love burst out of him.

It's after the Halloween feast, and instead of going back to their houses, Jungkook and Taehyung meet up in a deserted corridor, past curfew. It's a test of courage of sorts; the point of their nightly outing is to find the scariest places in the castle and prove to the other how brave they are. The more ghosts, the more spiderwebs, the more chill, the better.

Jungkook knows the castle well, but he lets Taehyung guide him through hallways that are supposed to be haunted, secret passageways behind tapestries; they sneak into old dungeons and shriek when an old man in a portrait, roused from his sleep, asks them in a displeased voice what they're doing out of their beds at this time of the night.

They run, hand in hand, until they end up in one of their usual abandoned classrooms, and once they've caught their breath back and managed to get a grip on themselves, they start dissolving into excited giggles, and Jungkook is struck again by how much he loves Taehyung. He wants to hug him, melt into him, bond his soul to his.

Taehyung's eyes gleam in the dark; the ethereal light of the full moon bathes him in a silvery glow and makes him look halfway between a ghost and an angel.

There it is, the real test of courage, the one that counts, and Jungkook must be brave.

He leans in and kisses him.

It's simultaneously the best and worst moment of his life; the best, because he's *kissing* Taehyung; the worst, because Taehyung isn't kissing him back. When Jungkook leans away from him, Taehyung is staring at him with wide eyes, looking utterly gobsmacked.

"I'm sorry," Jungkook whispers. "I don't know what I was thinking, it's just… you looked so beautiful, and… Was it a mistake? Be honest. I'll be fine with whatever you say."

"I don't know," Taehyung replies in a low voice. "Do it again?"

Blood rushing through his veins, fingers tingling, Jungkook kisses him again, and he wants to cry with how good it is, how incredible it feels—Merlin, he loves him, he loves Taehyung so much. His lips are warm against his, pliant, smooth like silk, and Jungkook thinks he could happily spend the rest of his days doing this, just this.

They kiss like that for a long time; long enough for Jungkook to think that maybe it wasn't such a mistake, after all.

The day after, it's Taehyung who initiates the kiss, when they come back to their deserted classroom. And then, every day after that, it becomes a habit.

The strangest part is how, while nothing is the same anymore, things don't change. They keep acing their potions and giggling together, Taehyung keeps impersonating everyone he knows, Jungkook keeps doodling things in his notebooks, and they keep meeting up in unused rooms of the castle, except that now, they don't just talk; they talk, and kiss, and talk, and kiss, and never talk about the kissing.

Taehyung is hard to read. It's a bit confusing for Jungkook, who has no idea what Taehyung even thinks of him. Are they boyfriends? Are they just friends who are snogging in their free time? He would ask, but he's head over heels in love with Taehyung and what they have looks so fragile, so evanescent, he's afraid of shattering it just by putting words on it—and that's the very last thing he wants. Better not to ask questions and enjoy everything Taehyung will give him.

For two months, it's hard to focus on anything else; all he can think about is Taehyung, all the time. His gaze follows his beautiful figure whenever it comes into his line of vision, even from afar; he secretly watches him from the other side of the Great Hall when they're eating. Sometimes, Jungkook sneaks into the Slytherin common room, in the dead of the night, and they talk and snog on the green couch. They're caught by Yoongi, once, luckily just chatting, so Taehyung explains that they're secretly friends but don't want anyone else to know, because it's easier to sell the nemesis story. Yoongi looks confused, but he doesn't ask any questions, bless him, and doesn't tell a soul.

For the Christmas holidays, Jungkook tells Taehyung he'll be staying in the castle because his parents are travelling. It's complete bollocks, but it gets the expected reaction.

"Guess I'll have to stay with you so that you don't spend Christmas alone," Taehyung winks, and Jungkook's heart combusts in his chest.

He tells the same lie to Jimin, who's luckily spending Christmas at Hoseok's place; otherwise, he would have invited Jungkook to his house. (Seokjin, who heard Jungkook wouldn't go home, does offer Namjoon's house as a place to stay, without even asking his cousin's opinion on the matter; naturally, Jungkook firmly declines his invitation.)

Finally, his friends leave, Taehyung's father leaves (after Taehyung feeds him a lie about wanting to have access to the school's library to study), and they're free to enjoy each other's company without having to fear being seen by unwanted eyes, considering that there are only two other students other than them, a Ravenclaw first-year and a Hufflepuff second-year, staying in for holidays. They stroll around the frozen lake, they have snowball fights, they fly on Jungkook's broomstick (with heating charms on their clothes), and when they're back to the castle, they drink hot chocolate with marshmallows inside and sit in front of the Slytherin's common room fireplace to play chess—and they kiss. A lot. Jungkook finds it gradually harder to keep his lips away from Taehyung's and to stop his hands from touching his clothes, his hair, his neck. He wants, wants, *wants* so much. His whole being is vibrating with it.

On Christmas Day, Taehyung offers Jungkook a new notebook for him to doodle inside (he's filled all of Taehyung's notebooks already) and crayons to go with it, while Jungkook gifts him a scarf that he charmed to be always warm. The dinner is gargantuan, with Jungkook's favourite foods and drinks, and crackers with magical items inside, and when it's over, Jungkook brings Taehyung to the Gryffindor tower, and they talk some more, and end up sharing Jungkook's bed.

When Jungkook wakes up, the next morning, and sees Taehyung's peaceful, sleeping face right in front of him, he wants to weep with joy.

(And does, a bit.)

Now that he gets to spend entire days with him, from the wee hours of the morning to the very last moments of the evening, and sometimes the whole night too, both of them hidden away under the covers in Taehyung's bed, in the deserted Slytherin dungeon, he realises how much more tender, gentle, thoughtful, Taehyung is when it's just the two of them. When Jungkook catches a cold after foregoing his scarf (carefully wrapped against the gifted notebook to protect it) during a snowball fight, Taehyung stays with him at all times, laying his wonderfully cold hand on Jungkook's burning brow, taking him to the hospital wing, making him drink Pomfrey's potions, cuddling against him to make him feel better, never minding the fact that he could catch it too.

They celebrate Taehyung's birthday and the New Year quite in the same way, and Jungkook is the happiest he's ever been, happier even than when he learned that he was a wizard, when he discovered Diagon Alley and Hogwarts, when he successfully cast his very first charm. He's already wondering how he's going to be able to detach himself from Taehyung and pretend that he's not madly in love with him when the classes resume and Jimin comes back.

So it comes as a bit of a shock when, after the hols are over and the students have returned to the castle, Taehyung tells him he wants to break up.

They're in their usual classroom, and Jungkook's mind explodes with blinding pain and a million questions. *Why? What happened? Is it me? So we really* were *together? Why? Was it too much, the holidays? Was I too greedy? Why? Don't you love me? Is it because I'm too clingy? Why?*

He feels like a wounded animal, shot in the gut with a rifle, dying in the snow. The pain is dizzying, but the most important thing, right now, is to make sure Taehyung doesn't see it. He doesn't want to show how vulnerable Taehyung makes him.

"Ok," he replies immediately.

Taehyung stares at him. After two months, he's still very hard to read, and Jungkook can't begin to guess what he's thinking, right now. Until he says it, shattering the remains of Jungkook's bleeding heart.

"I think it's best if we stay just friends."

"Ok." Jungkook has no idea how he looks right now. He just nods, and thinks maybe he's smiling, but he has absolutely no control over his reactions: his body is on autopilot, doing what it thinks is best to save Jungkook from crashing down on the ground—and obviously failing.

"You're okay with it?" Taehyung asks.

Jungkook's body shrugs. "Sure," his voice replies. "I don't mind."

"Right. Friends, then?"

"Yes, friends." His lips smile, while the glass shards of his broken heart turn to ashes, scattered in the cold January wind.

It turns out it's not so easy to go back to friends. Even if they try not to make it weird, at the beginning, there's an inevitable distance settling between them, and Jungkook, who cries himself to sleep every night, isn't strong enough to pretend he's fine during the day. They still partner up in Potions, but they don't giggle anymore, Jungkook doesn't doodle, their conversations are stilted, often cut short, and after Taehyung tells him one day that he won't be able to meet up in their classroom, they never do again.

It's both a relief and torture, because Jungkook can't stand to be so close to Taehyung, knowing that he can't be his anymore, but at the same time, he misses him like he's never missed anyone in his life, not even his parents during his first year.

January is hell. Jungkook has to fight on several fronts: he must hide to Taehyung how devastated he is by their break-up; he must hide to Jimin how crushed he feels, every second of every hour; he must pretend he's still the same Jungkook, while his whole world has blown up and his mind is a barren land, burnt to the ground.

He won't survive this, he thinks when January turns into February. He can't survive losing Taehyung. He might have been able to, had he never known the taste and the softness of his

lips, the perfection of his sleeping face in the small hours of the morning, but now he does, and he can't.

After deliberating for a long time, he finally writes a letter.

Taehyung,

Actually, I'm not ok with it. Not at all. I love you. I can't tell you how much I love you. Words don't exist yet for me to make you understand.

I don't want to go back to being friends. I want to be your boyfriend.

If you want it too, meet me on the 14 th in Hogsmeade at 2 o'clock. I'll be waiting on the bench that overlooks the Shrieking Shack.

If that's not what you want, no hard feelings. I'll never even mention it again. I just need to be sure.

I love you.

Jungkook.

He seals the letters with a charm that acts as acknowledgement of receipt, which will tell him if Taehyung even reads it. Then, during his next Potions class, he discreetly levitates the letter out of his bag and slips it inside Taehyung's, who's sitting two rows in front of him.

There. It's done. In a few days, he'll have his answer. And then…

Then, if Taehyung doesn't come, he doesn't know what he'll do.

On February 14th, it's snowing, and the wing is strong. A lot of the older, single students have elected to stay inside the warmth of the castle, instead of defying the elements. Jimin and Hoseok, for their part, had a romantic date at Madam Puddifoot's Tea Shop for Valentine's Day, and they left Jungkook in front of Honeydukes, after he told them he wanted to replenish his stack of Ice Mice, his favourite sweet. They didn't even question it, too eager to get rid of him and canoodle.

Right now, sitting on his bench, Jungkook feels like an Ice Mouse. He's charmed his clothes, of course, but the cold is so biting that the charms only last a few minutes before dying out, and he has to cast it successively on all his limbs, one after the other, which means there's always some part of his body that's cold.

The real snowstorm, though, is the one taking place in his heart when two o'clock comes to pass, then half-past two, then three. Taehyung read the letter, Jungkook knows he did; or at least, he opened it, since it triggered his acknowledgement of receipt charm. But no one's coming.

At some point, his new Potions partner Jordan Appleton appears, wrapped in multiple scarves, the tip of his long, freckled nose reddened by the cold.

“Hi, Jungkook!” he exclaims, smiling brightly. “What are you doing here?”

“I’m supposed to meet someone,” Jungkook replies, voice as biting as the weather. He has no patience left today to waste on Appleton.

“Blimey, in that cold? Want me to wait with you so you’re not alone?”

“No.”

Appleton stares at him. There are snowflakes stuck in his blond eyebrows.

“You sure? I don’t mind.”

“Fuck off, Jordan!” Jungkook roars. “Leave me the fuck alone!”

For once, Appleton looks like he doesn’t know what to say—that’s a first. Then, without a word, he turns around and leaves. Great. A least a small victory on this crappy day.

Jungkook waits until the very last minute, until he knows he’ll be stuck outside of the castle if he stays here any longer. His mind is empty. His tears freeze on his cheeks on the way back.

It feels like dying, not for the first time—and *definitely* not for the last.

Because two days later, he coughs up his first flower petal, while he’s staring bleakly at his tired reflection in the bathroom mirror. The petal slowly swirls in the air and falls on the ground, stark white against the dark grey stone.

It takes two months. Two months spent secretly coughing up white petals, more and more of them, with more and more blood on it; two months feeling like he’s dying before he tells Jimin and Hoseok, who laugh it off at first, until it happens in front of them. The seriousness of the situation dawns on them, then, and they take to the library, their faithful ally, who provides them, after days of research, with one, only *one* book mentioning the curse, apparently called *Hanahaki*—a book that tells them, in no equivocal terms, that he is *actually* dying.

Having the surgery is not an option—removing his ability to love is to remove what makes him human. He doesn’t want to look at Taehyung, at Jimin, at Hoseok, and not be able to remember what it felt like to love them.

Confessing is not an option. Twice, he’s chosen to expose his bare heart by making his feelings known to Taehyung, the first time by kissing him, the second time by pouring his heart out to him; twice, Taehyung has chosen to brush them away. Confessing a third time, now that he’s dying, would feel too much like coercing Taehyung and guilt-tripping him into something he doesn’t want—and it wouldn’t even work anyway.

Death is not an option. It’s a certainty, if his last, final hope fizzles out.

A memory charm. The thought is revolting: forget Taehyung? Forget the classroom, the doodles, the kisses, the Christmas hols? Forget the love he’s feeling for him, the scale of

which he's never known before and undoubtedly never will again? Forget all of that? It's impossible.

Unfortunately, it *is* possible—and it's his only hope of survival. He hesitates for a long time, but just as the emotional pain isn't receding one bit, the physical pain is getting stronger every day, and as much as he loves Taehyung, as much as he doesn't care about dying, he doesn't want to be the one who causes such suffering to his friends and his parents. He owes it to them to at least try.

A memory charm. If he forgets that he loves Taehyung, maybe his body will forget too, and the flowers will stop growing.

He decides, on an impulse, to do it after one last Potions class; seeing Taehyung quietly giggle with his new Ravenclaw partner over their potion, their heads leaning towards one another, is simply too much to bear. The ugly jealousy that eats at his heart is too painful to endure anymore.

He'll forget him, if he needs to. Once he does, he won't recall how much he would have wanted to remember him anyway. He won't be in pain anymore.

After the class, he rushes to his thankfully empty bedroom, sits cross-legged on his bed, and cries for a long time at the thought of everything he'll lose and won't remember he lost; then he wipes his tears and snot with his wrist and inhales deeply.

I love you so much, Taehyung. I'm so sorry.

He points the wand at his temple.

I need to forget absolutely everything related to Kim Taehyung.

"*Obliviate!"*

Chapter End Notes

A small detail regarding Jungkook's age: since he was born on the 1st of September, the fact that he is in the same year as Taehyung and Jimin means that he should normally be older than them. But I like him as the youngest, so I made it so that he was warned about his wizarding abilities a few months prior to going to Hogwarts instead of the very day of his birthday, as is normally the case in Harry Potter canon. (And now the question that keeps me up at night is: are muggle-born students born on the 31st of August warned just one day before going to Hogwarts???)

On borrowed time

Jungkook wakes up on an infirmary bed.

The first thing he's conscious of are the voices floating all around him, voices he has trouble understanding or identifying, but the mere sound of them comforts him. He stays there, unmoving, eyes closed, letting the voices get clearer and clearer, and assesses his physical state.

The assessment is not difficult: he feels like he was run over by a lorry. It hurts everywhere. His lungs are on fire, his throat burns, his head is killing him, and his heart, his heart is the worst, like it's stuck in a box with sharpened spikes on the inside, and each time it beats, the spikes stab into the hard, bleeding muscle. It's the pain he used to feel daily before the memory charm, when he still remembered that Taehyung didn't love him. He was blessedly free of it for a grand total of five days.

Bloody hell. He should have written himself a note explaining everything. He should have known he would be too curious, too panicked to let it be. He should have written himself a guide. *Do Not Reverse The Charm; Believe Me, I Know What I'm Doing,* page 1 of 20. True, it didn't heal the disease, but at least, for five days, he felt normal again, heartbreak-free. He was able to smile again, and joke, and live his life with no other worry than the occasional coughing up of flowers. It should have been enough.

The voices around him are familiar. Jimin and Hoseok are here, speaking in low tones with Madam Pomfrey and Mr Park. For a second, Jungkook hopes Taehyung is here too, before remembering Taehyung is not in love with him and therefore probably doesn't give a flying fuck what's happening to him.

A tear escapes his closed eyes. He feels it run on his temples and die in his hair, followed by more of the same. He wants to cry, and cry, and cry again, like he did a few days ago after his Potions class, when he saw Taehyung speaking in hushed tones, a secret smile on his lips, to his Ravenclaw lab partner and it felt like having a hand plunging in his chest to tear his heart out, and…

Shit.

He barely has time to roll over before he's coughing up flowers and blood once again. The pain is unbearable. He wants to claw at his throat and rip it out in the vain hope it might stop hurting. Pomfrey probably couldn't give him the usual potion while he was asleep.

When it's over, what seems like an eternity later, he doesn't pass out; he lies on his side and feels hands caressing his arm and patting his damp hair. He hears his friends, the Headmaster and the matron call out his name, but it takes a long time before he's finally able to open an eyelid.

Jimin's cheeks are wet with tears and Hoseok is literally white as a sheet: white skin, white hair, white eyebrows, everything. Even his irises are a disturbing white, a stark contrast with his black, dilated pupils, making him look like he's going to a Halloween party and dressed up as a ghost, or a terrifying snowflake. Mr Park is wringing his hands and Madam Pomfrey is frowning deeply.

"Do you hear me, Mr Jeon?"

Jungkook stares at her. If he was any good at legilimency, he'd reply directly in her mind, but he's not, and he doesn't know where his wand is anyway. He just watches her, unable to speak.

Luckily, she understands.

"Do you hear me? Blink once if you do."

Jungkook closes his eyelid, slowly, before opening it again. Jimin audibly exhales, and the matron smiles.

"Good, that's good. Stay with us, yes? I'll give you something for the throat. Do you think you can open your mouth?"

Opening his second eyelid, Jungkook slowly lifts his head and carefully opens his mouth. It fucking *hurts.* Pomfrey immediately grabs a cup with a straw inside and puts the tip in Jungkook's mouth.

"You know the drill," she says. "The wounds will start healing soon. Then, we can move on to the other potions."

It takes time, this time. Between the coughing up of thorny roses and the probably damaged trachea, he must have lost a lot of blood, he thinks. Do wizards do blood transfusions? Do they have a magic spell for that, too? Or a potion?

Maybe he could brew it with Taehyung—

The cup falls on the floor when he throws up flowers again. *Fuck,* is this going to happen every time he thinks about Taehyung? How the hell is he supposed to stop *thinking* about him? Except with a memory charm…

Fuck, I'm so *stupid.*

A part of himself knows he's not to blame: of course, upon losing their memories and not understanding why, anyone would try to retrieve them. He should have anticipated that.

Pomfrey presents him with a new cup, that he drinks while trying hard not to think about Taehyung. After the throat-healing potions comes the blood-replenishing potion (so there *is* one for that sort of thing) and the energy potion, and finally, he's able to sit up in his bed, pillow behind his back, and look at the people gathered around him.

(He was right. Taehyung's not here.)

(A few petals escape him.)

“What’s happening, Jungkook?” Hoseok is the first to ask. He’s really weird to look at, all white like that; Jungkook keeps wondering when the colour will come back to him. It’s his fault, he thinks. He’s the one making Hoseok lose his colours.

“It might be a stupid question, but how are you feeling?” Mr Park asks.

“Do you remember?” Jimin asks.

“Do you need me to make all these people go away until you’re strong enough to talk to them?” Madam Pomfrey asks, and it’s oh so tempting.

But Jungkook isn’t sure he’ll ever have the strength to talk to anyone, so he might as well do it now.

“No, it’s okay. I’m okay.”

His friends are waiting, expecting the rest of it. It doesn’t come.

“Do you remember?” It’s Hoseok who asks, this time.

“Yes.”

“And…?”

Jungkook shrugs. He’s angry, he realises. He doesn’t know who he’s angry at, but the rage is there, simmering in his stomach. “And there was a good reason why I tried to forget,” he snaps.

The look of dismay on their face is palpable; a few hours sooner, Jungkook would have felt guilty to be the cause of it. Right now, he’s simply too bitter, too tired, too emotionally exhausted to care.

“Is it…” Jimin glances at his father and Madam Pomfrey, who’re still listening. “Is it who you thought it was?”

“No,” Jungkook immediately replies.

He doesn’t know why he’s lying, but it’s vital to him that Jimin doesn’t know that it is, in fact, Taehyung. He doesn’t want him to hate Taehyung even more than he already does, and blame him for his death.

His friend looks shocked, and so does Hoseok.

“Who is it, then?”

“No one,” Jungkook says in a dull tone. “Forget about it.”

"*Forget about it?*" Jimin stands up, agitated. His hands keep convulsively squeezing the black fabric of his wizard robes. "Do you mean we Levitated you all the way from the Gryffindor Tower and watched over you for four hours—"

"Jimin," Hoseok interrupts, grabbing his boyfriend's arm. "Stop."

But Jimin doesn't stop. "*Four fucking hours,* to hear you saying '*forget about it'?* I won't forget about it, Jungkook! I can't! Do you know how *worried* we were when you vomited all that blood, all those petals, and that white rose with the stem on it—"

"Jimin!!" Hoseok stands up too. "Shut up!!"

Silence falls on the hospital wing. Jungkook has never heard Hoseok talk that way to Jimin, not in the two and a half years they've been together, and certainly not in front of his father; and Jimin probably hasn't either, judging by the way his eyes widen, before filling with tears.

Immediately, Hoseok softens. "I'm sorry, Jiminie," he says, taking his hands in his. "I was too harsh. I'm sorry."

"I'm just so *worried,* Seokie—"

"I know. We all are. But pushing Jungkook won't help. If he doesn't want to talk about it, you must respect that."

Jimin is not the only one crying; Hoseok's eyes are shining a bit too brightly, too, and Jungkook can feel his own tears slipping on his cheeks once again. The strangest thing is that it makes him miss Taehyung even more.

He coughs up a few more petals. Jimin, his hands in Hoseok's, turns to look at him, lips trembling, face ashen. Jungkook wipes his eyes.

"I'm sorry, Jimin. There's no way out. I'm dying for good."

"No!" Jimin shrieks. "No, I won't let that happen. Do you hear me? You don't want to tell me who it is? Fine! I don't give a shit, but for the love of Merlin, you better confess to whoever it is!"

Jungkook's smile is a broken, trembling thing. "I'm sorry. I did that already."

Hoseok gasps. Jimin stills.

"*What?*"

"I did confess. Twice. I was rejected. I'm not doing it a third time. It wouldn't be fair to anyone." Everyone is staring at him, the weight of their gazes too much to bear. He lowers his eyes. "I tried to tell you, before the memory charm. I already knew it was impossible. I just wanted to live the rest of my life without feeling that pain all the time… Well, it didn't work. And it's getting worse, now that I remember everything." As if on cue, he coughs again. A few petals fall on the sheets. He looks up at Madam Pomfrey. "I don't have a month left now, do I? Be honest. I've only got days. A week at best."

She looks as shaken as Jimin. “I’m not sure,” she replies in a soft voice. “Maybe more than a week, but…”

“Barely,” Jungkook finishes for her. “I can feel them squeezing my heart. The vines. They crush it a bit more each time I have a fit. It’s getting closer.”

“No!” Jimin sobs. “No, it can’t be. Try again, Jungkook, please! You have to tell them. That person you love, they don’t know you’re dying. If they knew…”

“If they knew,” Jungkook cuts, “they’d feel forced into loving me. They’d be under pressure. Have you ever fallen in love because you had to? If they didn’t love me before, they certainly won’t now.”

“But… if you explained to them…”

Jungkook shakes his head. “It would be emotional blackmail. I can’t do that to him. He doesn’t deserve to feel guilty about my death because he couldn’t love me.”

“But it’s unfair!” Jimin screams. “It’s so unfair!!”

Mr Park puts a hand on his son’s shoulder. It doesn’t seem to calm him down in the least.

“Jimin… Jungkook is right. If this person doesn’t love him, we can’t do anything about it. What we *can* do, and will do, is find who cast the curse and punish them.”

Jimin jerks away from his father’s hand. “That won’t help save Jungkook!”

I’m beyond saving, Jungkook thinks—but doesn’t say. It’s hard, watching his best friend lose his emotional footing. He wishes he could spare him the pain, because one person suffering is already quite enough, but he doesn’t know what to say that would make him calm down.

Luckily, Pomfrey senses that Jimin must be on the verge of a panic attack, because she presents him with a cup filled with a potion. Jimin doesn’t even try to resist; he gulps it down in one, before sinking on the chair he was sitting on when Jungkook woke up.

“Fuck,” he still mumbles, looking dazed.

His father pats his shoulder once again. “I’ll start investigating right away. Jungkook, if you need anything, anything at all, do tell me.”

“Actually, sir…” Jungkook hesitates and glances at Jimin. He doesn’t want to trigger a new panic onset, but maybe he doesn’t need to worry. Jimin’s eyes are glassy, hands tightly clutching at the tin cup—the Calming Draught is working its literal magic. Jungkook looks back at the Headmaster. “In a few days… not right now, but in a few days, when it’s over soon… Could you bring my parents here? I didn’t want them to know before, but now… I think it’ll be even worse for them if I go and they didn’t get to say goodbye.”

Mr Park blinks rapidly, probably to hold off his tears. His eyes are suspiciously shiny. “Of course, Jungkook. Just tell me when, and I’ll bring them.”

“Great. Thank you.”

With a final nod, the Headmaster leaves the hospital wing, and Madam Pomfrey turns to Hoseok and Jimin.

“Now, Mr Jeon here needs to sleep. Shoo, the both of you. It’s past curfew already, and Merlin knows you need the rest.”

“I want to stay here,” Jimin replies in a blank tone. “I don’t want to leave Jungkook. I can’t leave him if he’s dying in a week. I have to make the most of my best friend’s time while he’s still here—” His voice breaks, and suddenly, he’s sobbing again—quietly, this time, but his whole body is shaking.

“You won’t make the most of anything if you’re both sleeping,” Madam Pomfrey replies in a soft voice. “I promise you, tomorrow, I’ll let you stay here as long as you want. If he’s feeling better, I’ll even let him go. But now, he needs to sleep and so do you.”

“Come on, Jiminie,” Hoseok adds, taking his arm. “Let’s go back to our dorms.”

Jimin looks up at Jungkook, who nods. Finally giving up, Jimin stands up and agrees to leave with Hoseok—but not before giving Jungkook a bear hug before. Hoseok, for his part, ruffles Jungkook’s hair.

“Hey, Hoseok?” Jungkook calls out as they’re leaving. “Get your colours back, mate, it doesn’t suit you.”

“Like that, you mean?” Hoseok asks, his skin and irises returning to their usual colour, and his white hair and eyebrows morphing into a vibrant black that looks amazing on him.

“Yeah,” Jungkook smiles. “Much better.”

He’s careful about keeping the smile plastered on his face until they’re out of the door; only then, does he turn to Pomfrey, sighing.

“Ok, I need all the drugs you’ve got, now.”

“I’ll go fetch them,” she replies with a joyless smile.

Good, he thinks, watching her go. He needs to stop thinking about everything for a moment. Maybe forever, but for that, he won’t have to wait long anyway.

☆☆☆

The following day, thanks to the potions, Jungkook feels alive enough to leave the hospital wing. He’s slept twelve hours, but doesn’t feel much more rested. He supposes he won’t be able to rest anymore until he’s dead, anyway. The final rest.

He knows he's on borrowed time.

Before he leaves, Pomfrey warns him. “Next time you’re Levitated to my infirmary, you’re staying here, Mr Jeon. I can’t have you fainting in the corridors. It’s dangerous.”

Jungkook can’t help chuckling. “Dangerous? I’m dying anyway. There’s only so much damage falling down a flight of stairs can do. Might even be quicker and less painful that way.”

Pomfrey’s expression turns stern. “You’re not dead yet, Mr Jeon. I guess it’s up to you to decide how you want to go, but it’s up to me to fix you every time you come here, and the less I have to fix, the better.”

He shrugs. “Don’t worry about that. In a week, tops, you won’t have to fix anything anymore.”

Pomfrey frowns, looking displeased, so Jungkook hurries up and bids her goodbye before she can chastise him for saying such dark things.

It’s true, though. He’s dying. There’s nothing wrong in saying it like it is.

His friends tried to visit him this morning, when he was still sleeping, judging by his wand, which he found on his bedside table when he woke up, but left because, in spite of everything, they still had to attend their classes—or so Pomfrey told him. He has no idea if they’re still there, so he decides to try the Great Hall. Besides, it’s nearly noon, and he needs food, even if he’s not terribly hungry.

People are glancing at him all the way down, he notices. The tale of his late-night fit must have spread throughout the whole school.

But when he steps into the Great Hall, every head turns his way and the loud chatter suddenly melts into a furious murmur. Everywhere he’s watching, Jungkook sees eyes looking up at him, some curious, some distressed, and his best friends aren’t even here. What’s happening? Why is everyone staring at him?

Turning away—the sight of the whole school gawking at him completely ruined his appetite—he leaves the Hall and bumps straight into Seokjin.

“Jungkookie!” he says, surprised. “Hey, Hoseok told me you spent the night in the hospital wing! How are you feeling?”

Taking a few steps back, Jungkook looks up at Seokjin, and his heart melts in his chest. All their shared memories suddenly click into place in his brain, and he can’t believe he even managed to forget him: how he was the one who welcomed him in Gryffindor, how he used to comfort him when Taehyung made him cry in first year, how he helped him study, gave him tips for his exams, and listened to him whenever something was wrong.

He knows it’s barely been six days since he forgot him, but somehow it feels like years; and it’s not even the worst thing. The worst, he realises, is remembering what it was like to look

upon him and see a stranger instead of a brother. Whatever happens, he never wants to forget again.

“Seokjin,” he breathes, before almost throwing himself at the older student to hug him. “Merlin’s balls, it’s good to see you.”

“What? But we saw each other yester—oh! Did you get your memories back?”

“Yeah, and I’m so sorry I forgot you…”

“It’s okay, Jungkookie,” Seokjin replies, holding him tight. “You forgot the entire Slytherin House, anyway.”

Jungkook rolls his eyes. “I know.”

“Who is it, then? Did you confess? Why did you forget me?”

Carefully, he extracts himself from Seokjin’s arm and gives him a weak smile. “I botched the spell, it made me forget things I shouldn’t have. I’m sorry.”

Seokjin probably notices that he’s not replying to his first question, because he stares at him, eyes narrowed, but luckily decides not to press.

“Why is everyone gawking at me in there?” Jungkook asks. “I thought they already knew I was sick.”

“The Headmaster put the fear of Merlin into them this morning at breakfast,” Seokjin explains. “He told everyone you were under a terrible, painful curse, and that he was going to discover who cast it at you and ensure the culprit spend a good chunk of their life in Azkaban. Nobody had ever seen him so furious before. The one who cursed you must be shitting their pants.”

“Better be,” Jungkook snarls. “It’s their fault I’m fucking d—”

He stops himself just in time before saying the damned word. Luckily, Seokjin, distracted by his girlfriend passing them by and waving at him, doesn’t seem to notice and nods.

“Yeah, it’s a shitty thing to do. Especially if there’s no counter-curse. What are you supposed to do, keep coughing up flowers until the one you love finally notices you?”

Jungkook gives him a pained smile. “I suppose so.”

“Well, better make them fall in love with you quickly, then. Who is it? Half of the school is already in love with you anyway, so it shouldn’t be too hard.”

“And the other half is in love with you,” Jungkook tries to joke, “so I better land on the good half.”

Chuckling, Seokjin elbows him in the ribs. (It hurts.) “Send them to me, if that’s the case, I’ll redirect them to you! Ok, Lisa is waiting for me, I have to go.”

“See you later,” Jungkook says, relieved. He’s barely been out of his bed for half an hour and he’s already exhausted, both from standing and from talking with Seokjin.

When his friend disappears in the Hall, he decides to look for Jimin outside—sometimes, he and Hoseok go eat by the lake (though he’s not sure why they would choose to do it today, especially after Jimin’s panic attack the previous evening, but he needs some fresh air anyway).

But when he gets there, his friends aren’t anywhere in sight, of course, and maybe getting some fresh air wasn’t such a good idea after all, because walking by the lake brings back Christmas memories of strolls and snowball fights, and he ends up coughing up petals all the way, sometimes violently enough that he has to take out the throat-healing potion Pomfrey gave him from his pocket and take a few gulps.

Maybe he left the hospital wing too soon, he thinks half an hour later, when he’s walking up the path that leads back to the castle, legs shaking, panting. Flowers are *growing* in his lungs. Of course he will slowly become unable to do things that were natural to him before—like *walking.* It’s maddening but inevitable.

When he’s finally back inside the entrance hall, forehead damp with sweat despite the still cool May breeze, he lets himself heavily plop down on the marble stairs and tries to catch his breath.

This is spiralling out of control so very quickly. Only yesterday, he went to Diagon Alley and walked to the shop without feeling inconvenienced; but since his fit last night, and since his memories came back, it’s getting faster and faster.

Maybe he should Obliviate himself once again? No, the result would be the same anyway—and he can’t go through forgetting his loved ones again. He has no choice but to endure it.

But it’s hard—especially when two feet plant themselves just in front of him, and he’s forced to look up at Kim Taehyung in person.

It’s the first time he’s facing him again since he got his memories back, and it’s worse than the flowers—it’s the box with the spikes on the inside, squeezing his heart and stabbing him everywhere at once: the pain he’s come to associate with his one-sided love for Taehyung. It’s torture. He coughs up petals, but manages to keep them inside his mouth and spells them away with a discreet flick of his wand.

Taehyung is watching him, frowning.

“Is it true?” he asks, voice hoarse. He looks dishevelled, hair tousled, but not artfully, clothes in disarray. He looks shocked. “You had another fit and spent the night in the hospital wing? Seokjin told me. It’s getting worse, isn’t it?”

“No,” Jungkook replies, a reassuring smile on his lips. “Don’t worry. It’s all under control.”

But he coughs again, and this time, he can’t stop the petals from bursting out of his mouth. Taehyung is looking at him, eyes narrowed.

“Liar.”

“When have I ever lied to you?”

“You’re doing it now! Wait—what does that mean? Did you get your memories back?”

“Yeah. Don’t worry, Taehyung. You were right; it’s not you.”

Taehyung stares at him for a long time, before shaking his head. “See? I told you.”

You’re so fucking stupid! Jungkook wants to scream. *How can you not see how much I love you?! I fucking wrote you a love letter!* But there are none so blind as those who will not see, and Jungkook doesn’t intend on making him. Taehyung obviously wants to keep believing whatever will bring him the least amount of guilt, and he can’t even blame him for that. He doesn’t want to. It’s too wrong that Taehyung should carry the burden of not being able to love him.

He shakily stands up. “Yep, you were right. Slow clap. Sorry, I have to go.”

Taehyung, unfortunately, is not done with him and follows him in the hallways, and Jungkook is nowhere near fast enough, today, to run from him.

“Wait! Who is it really, then?”

“It’s Jimin,” he replies, deadpan. “But he’s in love with Hoseok. Nothing to do about it.”

Taehyung stops dead in his tracks. “You’re joking.”

“Yes, Tae, I’m joking.” He sighs. “Why do care so much anyway?”

Taehyung steps back, looking hurt. “Who do you think I am, Jungkook? A heartless monster? Of *course* I care!”

Jungkook turns to look at him, frowning. “You do?”

“*Yes!* I know what happened between us wasn’t… ideal, and I wish I could turn back time and do everything differently, but I care about you a lot.”

It’s crazy how much this simple sentence makes Jungkook want to cry. He wishes caring would be enough to cure his disease.

“What would you have done differently?” he can’t help asking in a low voice. “Would you have said no from the start?”

When Taehyung opens his mouth to reply, Jungkook realises he really doesn’t want to hear it. He raises a hand.

“You know what, don’t answer that. It won’t change anything anyway.”

Taehyung’s mouth snaps shut. Jungkook sighs.

“Can you just tell me one thing?” he asks. “Did you read it? The letter?”

“The letter? The one you wrote to me back in February? Yeah… I did.”

Oh. He really did read it, then. Jungkook feels like a fool for hoping he didn’t—hoping that maybe someone else opened it instead, and that it was the reason why he didn’t come to Hogsmeade that day. He doesn’t know what he was expecting. He put the letter *inside* his bag—of course no one else than him was going to read it.

Besides, if Taehyung did love him, he’d be cured already.

The usual, familiar pain flashes through his gut and he doubles over to throw up. It’s a big one, this one. Not nearly as violent as the one from last night, but enough to make him collapse on all fours on the floor.

“Jungkook!” he hears Taehyung scream. “Fuck!”

When the fit is over, there is a puddle of blood on the floor and a beautiful white rose with its thorny stem lying in the middle of it, petals floating around. Sitting up, Jungkook leans against the wall and picks it up to look at it closely.

“It’s beautiful,” he croaked, his voice ragged, his throat painful. “Why is it so beautiful?”

Taehyung, crouching next to him, strokes his shoulders and his nape to comfort him, but doesn’t reply.

“Do you want it?” Jungkook asks with difficulty.

“No,” Taehyung whispers. “Why would I want something that’s hurting you?”

“Maybe just as a souvenir of me.” The moment he says it, he knows he shouldn’t have, because Taehyung is shooting him a strange, vaguely alarmed look.

“I don’t need a souvenir of you. You’re here, aren’t you?” he says in a low voice.

You should take the souvenir, Taehyung, Jungkook thinks.

“Help me up. Jimin will panic if he sees me like this,” he replies instead, then fishes the throat-healing potion in his pocket and drinks a few drops.

They taste like blood.

Taehyung helps him up. “Where were you going? I can go with you.”

“I need to find Jimin. I don’t know where he is, so I was going to wait in the Hufflepuff common room. But I can go alone.”

“Jungkook, you shouldn’t…”

“I’ll go alone, Taehyung,” Jungkook cuts him. “Thanks for helping me up. Here.” He puts the rose in his hand before Vanishing the mess on the ground. “Keep it.”

He’s already leaving when he hears Taehyung mumbling, “I don’t want to keep it.”

He doesn’t look back.

☆☆☆

Jimin and Hoseok aren’t in the Hufflepuff common room, and Jungkook lets out a new sigh. They’re probably in the Gryffindor Tower, then, waiting for him, but the sheer number of stairs that separate the Hufflepuff Basement from the Gryffindor Tower makes him shudder with dread. He’s running on low battery—and he didn’t even eat.

Instead of pushing his body through five flights of stairs, he decides to stay here, and lets himself fall down on his favourite armchair, a yellow thing, very deep, with lots of squashy cushions. Spotting a Hufflepuff fourth-year in a corner, he hails her.

“Hey! You!” He doesn’t know her name, but it doesn’t matter, since the girl turns to him. He motions her to come, uncaring about the fact that it’s a little rude. Life’s too short.

“Yes?” the girl says when she’s in front of him. She looks nervous—her cheeks are flushed and she’s wriggling about like she wants to use the loo. Maybe she’s part of the half of the school that fancies him, Jungkook thinks, amused—although he doesn’t think it’s true. He did get a few love confessions over the years, but nothing comparable to Seokjin, or even Taehyung, for that matter.

“Would you do me a favour?” Jungkook asks in his most seductive voice, hoping it’ll help woo her. “Would you be a darling and go to the Gryffindor Tower to look for my friends, Jimin and Hoseok, sixth and seventh-year Hufflepuffs? And if they’re there, can you tell them to meet me right here?”

“S-Sure, Jungkook,” the girl stutters, blushing deeply. “H… How are you? You were hit by a curse, right? That makes you cough up flowers until you confess to the one you fancy? The Headmaster told us this morning.”

“I’m okay,” Jungkook smiles. “Thanks for asking. I’m a bit tired, though, which is why I’m asking you that.”

“I’ll—I’ll go right away!”

She almost runs to the passageway leading to the hallway, and Jungkook, left alone in the room, sits across the chair, head and legs on the armrests, wistfully looking at the circular windows above him, displaying a pale blue sky streaked with wispy clouds.

He doesn't have to wait very long until he hears someone going through the passageway, but when he looks, he sees that it's not his friends, but Yoongi, who emerges from the hole and dusts his black robes. Jungkook got to know him better, just a bit, when he was still friends with Taehyung. He always looks like he's annoyed, but it's just because he's bored—most of the time. He's incredibly clever and doesn't like to talk, except when it's about the things he loves most—like dark magic. Jungkook is glad he remembers these details about him. Stupid charm.

Surprised, he sits up. "Hey, Yoongi. What are you doing here?"

"What do you think? Do I look like I barge into other people's common room just for the pleasure of intruding?" Yoongi replies drily, which Jungkook doesn't take personally—that's how he usually talks. "I was looking for you. Taehyung told me you'd be here."

"Is it about the curse? Did you find something?" Jungkook asks, hopeful.

Yoongi crosses the room and sits on the sofa next to Jungkook's armchair. He doesn't even look at the room, which makes Jungkook think he's probably been here before. No, it's a certainty; otherwise, he wouldn't have known that the entrance was hidden by a stack of barrels, and on which one to tap to reveal the passageway.

"Not much. I think you already know everything there is to know, but I figured it couldn't hurt telling you anyway."

"Ok. I'm listening."

Yoongi is right: the things he tells him, Jungkook knows them already. No counter-curse. The magical surgery option.

"So, confessing is not enough," Yoongi adds. "The other person has to reciprocate the feelings for the curse to go away."

Shit, Jungkook thinks. If it just had been a matter of confessing, and not having to be loved back, it would have been easier. Not that he had much hope from the beginning, but now, there's none at all left.

"It's a vicious curse, isn't it?" he can't stop himself from saying, frowning. "The only thing that could save me would be their love, but I keep coughing up flowers *because* they don't love me."

"That's not necessarily true," Yoongi replies. "They might already love you, but as long as your mind thinks they don't, you won't heal. That's why Amortentia doesn't work in this case: your brain knows the love is manufactured."

Jungkook raises an eyebrow. "What about if they don't love me, but my mind thinks they do? Would that heal me?"

"It's an interesting point of view. I don't think that's how it works, but even if it were, if you really believed in their love, you wouldn't even have gotten sick from the beginning," Yoongi

replies.

“How about a Confusion Hex? Could that help me believe it?”

Yoongi frowns. “Are you telling me you want to cast another potentially damaging spell at yourself? For something that probably won’t work?”

“Well, I’m running out of options, aren’t I?” Jungkook points out. “Whatever book told you what you know about the curse must have told you that it is fatal, too.”

“Yeah,” Yoongi replies, voice low, frowning. “If you don’t get the surgery.”

“I’m not getting the surgery,” Jungkook says firmly. “Dying is scary, but it’s a thousand times better than forgetting how to love.”

Yoongi stares at him, then shrugs. That’s what Jungkook likes about him: he never tries to push, even when he visibly disagrees. And he’s not making a fuss about Jungkook dying, either—it looks a bit like he doesn’t care one way or the other, but strangely, Jungkook likes it. It’s refreshing.

When he stands up to leave, Jungkook stops him.

“Hey, Yoongi… Can you not tell them, please?”

“Who? What?”

“Seokjin, Namjoon, Taehyung. That I’m dying.”

“They’ll know anyway, eventually. Why not tell them now?”

“I… I just want to spare them the pain for a bit longer.”

“Alright… if that’s what you want. By the way, I forgot: there is a way to find out who did that to you.”

Jungkook stands up immediately. “What?! How? Prior Incantato?”

“The Reverse Spell wouldn’t work. I mean, it could, but since we don’t have any idea of who cast the curse, we would have to test every wand in the school, going back months, and that’d take too long; by the time we’d be done, you’d already be dead. No, there’s another way.”

“What is it?”

“I’m getting to it,” Yoongi replies in an annoyed tone. “Magic has a colour signature, or rather a spectrum, if you will, that can be traced back on wands with a certain spell. The Hanahaki Curse falls on the deepest side of the dark magic spectrum, so it taints the wand. The spell should be able to show us how tainted the wand is; the most tainted one in the school is probably the one who did this to you.”

Jungkook blinks, not entirely sure he understands. “But… what about jinxes? Hexes? Wouldn’t that taint the wand, too? Taehyung used to jinx me a lot, when we were in first year. Wouldn’t his wand appear tainted?”

“It’s not the same scale at all,” Yoongi replies. “Jinxes are barely even considered dark magic. Hexes are moderate dark magic. But fatal curses like Hanahaki are the darkest there is, along with the Unforgivable Curses. It will appear for sure.”

“But what if… let’s say, someone in the school cast an Imperius Curse at someone else? Then we’d have two people with tainted wands? How would we do, then?”

“Then, we could always use the Reverse Spell. It wouldn’t take as long if there are only two wands to analyse.”

“Right,” Jungkook nods, feeling hopeful for the first time. “That’s great. I mean, it won’t help me survive this, but at least, the fucker who did that will go to Azkaban. Too bad there are no Dementors there anymore. Say, could you please go and tell the Headmaster about this?”

Yoongi frowns. “Do it yourself. I’ve done my part.”

“I would, but it’s getting harder and harder to walk, with my lungs, and his office is on the other side of the castle. Please?” He bats his eyelashes, eyebrows squished together.

Yoongi, for all his cold demeanour, isn’t immune to his puppy eyes. “Okay,” he sighs, rolling his eyes. “Brat.”

Jungkook grins. “Thank you!”

“Yeah, yeah.”

Mumbling to himself, Yoongi exits the room, leaving Jungkook alone, fuelled with a new determination. He’s going to find the son of a bitch who did that to him, even if it’s the last thing he does.

And it probably will be.

Testing the wands

Over the next day, Jungkook can't help but notice that since he got his memories back, his physical state really took a turn for the worst. He can't say if it's because the violent fit he had that sent him to the hospital wing accelerated the process, or because remembering Taehyung automatically comes with the familiar ache that makes him cough his guts up; in any case, he keeps spilling more and more petals, more and more flowers.

He still drags his body from classroom to classroom, in a last-ditch attempt to pretend everything is normal, but it's hard to focus, and he's exhausted.

"Yoongi told Dad about the spell to trace the magic signature," Jimin tells him at lunch that day—of course, Jungkook had recounted their interaction to his friends as soon as they showed up. "Dad's asking the Board of Governors today if he's allowed to test the students' wands. If the answer is yes, he'll do it tomorrow morning at breakfast."

"Good," Jungkook nods, playing with his food. "That's good."

"You should eat your lunch, Jungkook," Hoseok says softly. "Instead of stabbing it."

"I can't," he sighs. "I'm not hungry. I think I'll throw up if I eat anything."

It's probably the vines, taking up more and more space in his body and squeezing his organs until total malfunction. Which one is going to fail first? His lungs, his stomach? His heart?

He feels light-headed during his DADA class, and Jimin wants to take him to the hospital wing again, but he adamantly refuses; Double-Potions is coming up next and he wants to see Taehyung.

If he's dying soon, let him at least enjoy the last moments he can share with him.

Stuffed to the throat with Pomfrey's potions (drug overdose very well might be the cause of his death, in the end), he drags himself down to the dungeons. He's extremely late, because Jimin threatened to Stupefy him and get him to the infirmary if he didn't swing by the kitchens to ask the house-elves for something to eat—but Professor Dillingus doesn't seem to mind one bit. He looks at him with such warmth, Jungkook wonders if he knows he's dying.

"Come in, Mr Jeon. You're a bit late," he smiles.

Inside, the students are already working on their potion, alone, this time, but Jungkook doesn't think he's going to be able to brew his own alone.

“Can I partner up with someone, Professor?” he asks instead. He doesn’t want to add ‘*I don’t feel good enough to do anything’*, but luckily, the Professor understands the meaning behind his words and nods.

“Of course, Mr Jeon. Take your pick.”

A few heads turn to look at him, including Appleton’s resentful eyes, but Jungkook’s already heading towards Taehyung and dropping his bag next to the table.

“Mind if I join you?” he asks in a low voice.

Taehyung, tie and top buttons undone, glances at him. “Be my guest.”

He then turns back to his potion, before looking back at Jungkook, for a bit longer this time.

“You look like crap,” he whispers. “You’re white as a sheet.”

Jungkook smiles. “Just a bit tired.”

It’s not a lie, per se; in fact, just sitting down on the bench is a relief. Taehyung stares at him, worry clearly visible in his eyes.

“You should go back to your bedroom and lie down,” he whispers, eyes roaming Jungkook’s entire face.

“Nah, I’m good,” Jungkook replies, voice just as low. “I’d rather watch you. What are you brewing?”

“Wolfsbane Potion,” Taehyung replies. “Do you want to help me?”

“No, you’ll do much better without me.” Jungkook smiles, but it doesn’t make Taehyung’s frown go away.

For a while, Taehyung works in silence, adding ingredients to his potion and stirring, while Jungkook watches him, his long fingers, his forearm muscles moving under his golden skin, his beautiful profile—but along with gazing at Taehyung inevitably comes the familiar longing, the ache, and he has to look away too many times to cough up petals. He immediately spells them away, but each fit still attracts Taehyung’s and his classmates’ attention.

“Don’t you want to go to the hospital wing, Mr Jeon?” Professor Dillingus asks after he’s had to Vanish his fifth batch of petals.

“I’m all right, Sir,” Jungkook replies, voice hoarse.

Professor Dillingus stares at him, but doesn’t insist, and lets him just sit next to Taehyung, who is, for his part, completely messing up his potion.

“Fuck,” he murmurs after putting too many hellebore seeds in the golden brown liquid, which immediately turns reddish and viscous; in fact, it looks a lot like the blood Jungkook spits out

during his fits. Taehyung must think so, too, because he suddenly becomes very pale and turns to look at Jungkook.

“Do you know who did this to you?” he whispers, sitting next to him on the bench, giving up on his potion.

“Not yet, but the Headmaster is working on it. Yoongi found a useful tracing spell. They should be testing everyone’s wands tomorrow morning, at breakfast.”

“And then?” Taehyung’s intense gaze is fixed on him, unwavering.

Jungkook shrugs. “Then… It won’t change anything, since there is no counter-curse. But at least, I’ll know who did this before I d–”

It doesn’t matter that he cuts off his sentence upon realising what he was going to say—unlike with Seokjin, the harm is done. Taehyung is gawking at him, mouth open, panic flashing in his gaze.

But he doesn’t say anything. Jungkook observes the way he quickly composes himself, smoothing his beautiful features under a mask of neutrality, and he thinks it will be the end of it. Taehyung doesn’t want to hear about what’s going to happen next, because he knows, and he knows he’s the only one with the power to stop it, but can’t.

“It’s okay, Taehyung,” Jungkook starts saying. “I get it, don’t…”

But Taehyung grabs his wrist and stands up. Dumbfounded, Jungkook watches him as he calls out to Professor Dillingus.

“Sir, Jungkook really doesn’t feel good. May I take him to the hospital wing?”

Everyone turns to look at them, and Jungkook blinks, too gobsmacked to say anything.

“Er… Yes, of course!” Professor Dillingus replies, a bewildered look on his face. “You’re both excused from class.”

“Thank you, Professor,” Taehyung says in a pompous voice.

Then, he lets go of Jungkook and quickly puts his belongings in his bags, before extending his hand out to him, which Jungkook slowly takes.

Hand in hand, their bags on their shoulders, they leave the classroom, followed by their classmates’ and teacher’s curious gazes, and Jungkook’s mind is nothing but a big question mark. Taehyung isn’t dragging him to the infirmary; he’s heading somewhere else, and Jungkook wonders just *where* until he recognises the stairs behind the tapestry, the dusty corridor.

Sure enough, five minutes later, he’s standing in an empty classroom—*their* empty classroom, and the sight of it is enough to make Jungkook cough out a few petals. It’s painful; he’s already panting hard, lungs aching from having followed Taehyung and kept up

with his too-fast pace through the numerous hallways and staircases. Taehyung stares at him, silent until Jungkook gets his breathing back under control, which takes a while.

“Why did you bring me here?” Jungkook can’t help but ask when he’s finally able to talk. “You said you were going to take me to the hospital wing.”

“Just… Just be honest with me. You’re dying, aren’t you?”

The word has the effect of a bomb, but a silencing one; suddenly, everything stops around Jungkook, and there’s nothing anymore, no sound, no time, just Taehyung and his dark eyes fixed on him, waiting for an answer. Jungkook’s heart is pounding, and it hurts even more than usual, what with the vines squeezing the pulsating organ.

Sighing, he sits down on the cold floor, leaning against the wall. There’s no point in keeping the secret anymore, he supposes, since Taehyung is directly confronting him about it.

“Yeah,” he breathes out.

For a long time, Taehyung doesn’t say anything, and Jungkook wonders what he’s thinking. Then, he comes to sit next to him, against the wall, knees bent up, and hides his head between his arms, fingers buried in his black curls. The very picture of desperation—and Jungkook can guess why. The guilt must be tremendous.

“When?” His voice comes out stifled.

“Eventually,” Jungkook replies evasively.

Taehyung shifts his head, so he’s looking at Jungkook from behind his arm, still wrapped around his skull.

“When,” he repeats, tone flat.

“Don’t ask, Taehyung,” Jungkook says in a soft voice. “You don’t want to know.”

Taehyung’s eyes are shining bright with tears. He blinks them away.

“Fuck.”

For a long time, they don’t talk at all; then Taehyung sits up and rests his head on Jungkook’s shoulder. It feels so right, Jungkook thinks, turning his face towards him and ending up with his nose in the black curls, the smell of his hair filling his abused lungs. It’s exactly what he needs, and it’s also exactly what’s killing him right now: knowing that Taehyung is physically so close, yet emotionally too far to save Jungkook.

“Is there really no other way?” Taehyung murmurs after a long moment has passed, surprising Jungkook, who thought he had maybe fallen asleep. “Is there no other issue for you than death?”

“None worth exploring.”

Taehyung straightens up to look at him. Jungkook's shoulder suddenly feels cold.

"None worth exploring? What does that mean?"

He looks so fierce, so determined to get answers, that Jungkook has no other choice but to tell him about the magical procedure, the one that would remove the flowers and his capacity for love. When he's done, Taehyung blinks.

"A surgery that would remove your feelings?"

"Yes. Those are my choices. Die, or live like a zombie."

"What's a… zombie?"

"It's… er, never mind." Jungkook shakes his head. "I don't want that. It was painful enough forgetting the people I loved, after the memory charm. I don't want to forget what it feels like to love Jimin, Hoseok, Seokjin." He hesitates, then adds, "To love you."

"You love me?" Taehyung asks, his black eyes fixed on Jungkook's. He looks so genuinely surprised that Jungkook can't help but give him a bemused smile.

"Of course I love you. Taehyung, you *know* that I do."

"…I love you too, Jungkookie," Taehyung whispers, taking his hand.

Jungkook stares at him, heart beating wildly in his chest—Taehyung has never said that to him, never.

And yet, it's not enough; Jungkook knows it's not even before he coughs up a lone petal, that falls softly on his lap. It's not enough, because Taehyung loves him the way Jimin loves him: as a good friend, but nothing more.

It's ok, though. Even if Taehyung isn't in love with him, as long as he loves him, he will still die happy.

☆☆☆

The following morning, Jungkook is woken up with a start by the Headmaster's magically amplified voice, spreading through the whole castle.

"Students are requested to gather in the Great Hall in half an hour, after breakfast. Morning classes are cancelled. Further explanation will be given then. Missing students without approved justification will be subject to sanctions. Thank you."

The message is ominous at best, but Jungkook knows what's happening; Jimin told him the night before, when he met him in the Hall after parting with Taehyung. His father got the

school's board authorisation to analyse the wands and will do so this morning. In an hour, two at most, Jungkook will know who cursed him. (At least, he hopes so.)

Jungkook's roommates aren't here when he opens his curtains, which is just as well, because the flowers are being very temperamental today, and he keeps coughing them up as he tries to get dressed.

(Or maybe it's because he can't stop thinking about the way Taehyung told him he loved him, yesterday.)

(Or just because he can't stop thinking about Taehyung *at all.*)

(In retrospect, he really might have lived a few weeks longer if he hadn't been stupid enough to second-guess his own decision and undo the damn spell.)

It's a hardship, getting to the Great Hall. He has to hold onto the walls while he walks, scattering crumbled, bloodied petals in his wake. When he gets there, the room is full to the brim, like it never is in the morning, and all the teachers are standing in front of the Professors' table, including Taehyung's brooding father, the much detested Astronomy Professor—whom Jungkook can't say he's glad he remembers. There is also Jimin's father, standing tall, and, next to him, a witch dressed in blue wizard robes that Jungkook doesn't know. It's all very intimidating, and a nervous murmur is spreading over the four tables, packed with students in their black uniforms, looking half-asleep and half-excited.

When he steps inside, contrary to what he expected, he only gets a few glances, and he realises that nobody knows why they've been asked to gather, except for him and his friends, whom he spots sitting at the Hufflepuff table.

They left a space between them, and Jungkook doesn't even hesitate, going to sit at their table—but as he's stumbling towards them, a voice stops him.

"Mr Jeon! Please, come here." The Headmaster's voice booms across the Hall, and a deep silence falls upon the tables. Jungkook freezes.

From the Professors' table, the Headmaster smiles at him and beckons him to come closer. With a last glance at Jimin and Hoseok, who both nod, he unsteadily makes his way across the Hall, followed by the gaze of hundreds of students.

When he gets there, the Headmaster puts a hand on his shoulder, an amiable smile on his lips.

"Please join us here, Mr Jeon, while I explain to your schoolmates why they're here."

It's embarrassing to be put on the spot like that, but Jungkook doesn't care; when you're dying, a lot of things stop mattering anymore, he finds. It's absent-mindedly that he listens to Jimin's father reminding the rest of the school that he's under a terrible curse, the caster of which will be severely reprimanded when found.

"And they *will* be found," the Headmaster adds. "Which is why I must tell them that, should they make themselves known right this instant and atone for their actions, I, along with the

Board of Governors, represented by Chairwoman Ella VanDecken," he says, nodding at the witch dressed in blue, "shall show mercy and lighten the inevitable sanction. If not, they will be expelled and might very well, if no cure is found, end up in Azkaban."

A shiver runs through the assembly, but Jungkook barely pays it any attention; his eyes are roaming the tables, looking for the one face he can't find: Taehyung isn't here.

It's odd. Why isn't he here? Does he have something to hide?

He discreetly coughs up a few petals, while Jimin's father continues his speech.

"The reason you're all gathered here is so that we can test your wands for the curse that was cast on Mr Jeon. If you're innocent, you have absolutely nothing to fear. It is in your right to refuse that your wand be tested; nevertheless, I strongly advise that you accept, for if we cannot find the caster of the curse, the investigation will be handed over to the Aurors… who will be much less accommodating than me."

Another shudder, followed by a panicked whispering.

"So, I'm asking once again: does anyone want to come out and confess to casting the curse?"

All noise immediately dies down, replaced by a rustle of fabric when everyone wriggles on their seats to look around, in the hopes of seeing someone raise their hand.

Nobody does, of course.

Mr Park sighs.

"Right. Very well, then. Is there anyone who refuses to have their wand tested? Please stand up."

Against Jungkook's expectations, a seventh-year Slytherin student slowly stands up.

"Mr Romero," the Headmaster says. "Would you care to explain your choice?"

"I'm not refusing," the student hastily replies. "I just have a question."

"We're listening."

"That… spell you're casting on our wands to test them. What kind of spell is it? I mean, I didn't cast that curse on Jeon, but… will it reveal anything else?" The student, a brown-haired boy with thick features, looks sheepish.

Jimin's father gives him a wry smile. "Whatever you're afraid of us finding out, Mr Romero, let me tell you how it works: the spell will help us detect traces of dark magic. Very powerful curses. It is the only thing we're interested in. If you don't go around casting Unforgivable Curses at your classmates, or the likes, then I can assure you, you don't have anything to fear."

"Oh," the boy replies, looking relieved. "All right. I don't mind, then."

When he sits back again, the Headmaster nods. “Anyone else?” When nobody moves, he insists. “No? Well, then, please stand up and join a queue in front of your teachers, who will be performing the tracing spell on your wand. Once it has been tested, return to your seat and wait. No one is to leave the room before the testing is over.”

For a few seconds, nobody moves, nobody blinks: then, Jimin and Hoseok, of course, firmly stand up and walk up towards the teachers, before stopping in front of the Headmaster. Everyone is watching, prodigiously interested.

“I’ll start,” Jimin says in a loud voice that reverberates across the Hall. “Test mine first.”

For a moment, Jungkook stops thinking about Taehyung’s absence and watches avidly, curious to see how it’s done. Jimin hands his wand to his father, who takes it and points at it with his own.

“*Colorum Revelare*!” the Headmaster exclaims.

It’s way less spectacular than Jungkook thought it would be. The only thing happening is a white, fluffy-looking cloud bursting out of Jimin’s wand; it floats above their heads for a few seconds, illuminating their faces, then disappears.

“Perfect,” the Headmaster smiles, before looking at Hoseok, whose hair is slowly turning a soft orange: the colour of his courage.

His wand lets out a cloud even brighter than Jimin’s, and the Headmaster proudly nods.

“You can both go back to your seats. Everyone else, queue up, please!”

Certainly relieved after witnessing the innocent-looking tracing spell, everyone stands up at once in a loud ruckus, and forms queues in front of the teachers—not all of them, Jungkook notices when he sees Professor Kim standing on the side. Probably only those who have volunteered to test the wands.

Jungkook, fascinated, watches the process. Most clouds are bright white; some are a light grey, or a light blue. Romero’s cloud is a pretty pink—the Headmaster gives him a knowing wink which makes him violently blush.

“How are you feeling, Mr Jeon?” the witch in blue—Ella VanDecken, he remembers—asks him softly, while the Professors keep casting the tracing spell. “I’m sorry about what’s happening to you.”

She looks curious, too, as if she wants to see first-hand what it looks like when someone spits out flowers; Jungkook obliges. It’s not hard; he just has to think about Taehyung for the petals to find their way out of his body. It’s satisfying, in a way, to see how quickly curiosity vanishes from her face, replaced by horror.

That’s what it looks like, Jungkook thinks bitterly.

“I’m peachy,” he replies in a husky voice, before looking over at the numerous white clouds being expelled from the wands. “Do you know what will happen when we find the one who

cast the curse?"

VanDecken looks like she needs the distraction of conversation. "Well, the cloud will be dark. Very dark. Curses like that leave a deep mark in the essence of the wand."

Jungkook nods, deep in thought. They're already halfway through the queues, and the clouds are all a different hue of white, sometimes tending towards blue, green or red, if their owner is prone to casting a specific type of magic. Yoongi's wand is the first to let out a pronounced grey colour, and Professor Dillingus, who's testing his wand, frowns, but the Headmaster shakes his head.

"Not dark enough," he says.

What if it's not a student? Jungkook suddenly thinks, glancing at Professor Kim, who's watching the whole process with a deep frown. What if it's a teacher? Someone who hated him from the first day, someone who's always been resentful about a Muggle-born student getting better marks than his pureblood son, someone who never had any compunction, throughout the years, about treating him unfairly? Discriminating, even?

Would Professor Kim let the Headmaster test his wand?

He deliberates for a good while; when there are but a few people left in each queue, he decides to speak up and ask the Headmaster.

But just as he opens his mouth, he's interrupted by a commotion at the other end of the Hall.

"You fucking cunt!" a voice shrieks. "Let go of me!"

The Great Hall doors are still open; the noise comes from outside. Inside, the teachers stop what they're doing and the chatter between the seated students dies down, everyone turning towards the racket; to Jungkook's utter stupefaction, two people storm inside, one holding the other by his shirt collar, dragging him on the floor. The student being dragged is bellowing, face red with rage, but his hands and legs are joined together by a Half Body-Bind Curse.

In a silence only troubled by ferocious screams, Taehyung, looking absolutely outraged, hauls Appleton across the floor and tosses him at the Headmaster's feet.

"Test that fucker's wand!" he exclaims in a booming voice. "Let's see what comes out of it, eh?"

"Taehyung!" Jungkook exclaims, shocked, at the same time as Professor Kim, while the Headmaster looks positively gobsmacked.

"What's happening, Taehyung?" he asks, too shocked to remember to use his family name.

"It's him, Headmaster!!" Taehyung cries out, and Jungkook has never seen him so agitated, nor angry. "He's the one who cursed Jungkook!"

"It's not me!" Appleton shrieks, still lying on the floor, magically bound, unable to get up. "I didn't do anything! You're the one who cursed him!"

“Shut up!” Taehyung roars. His hair is a wild disarray of black curls, his uniform is a mess; he looks quite deranged. “He knew! He heard Jungkook tell me yesterday that you were going to test our wands today. He was hiding in the Slytherin Dungeon, thinking no one would notice if he wasn’t there. Well, *I* noticed!”

Jungkook is gaping at him, too flummoxed to react. *Appleton?*

The Headmaster is the first to get a grip on himself; with a wordless wave of his wand, he undoes the Half Body-Bind—but when Appleton gets up, free of his restraint, his first move is to point his wand at Taehyung, mad with rage.

“Expelliarmus!” Jungkook exclaims before anyone else can do anything. The wand flies from Appleton’s hand and lands into Jungkook’s.

“Calm down, Mr Appleton!” the Headmaster howls. “Or do you want me to Body-Bind you again?”

“It’s not me!” Appleton screams—but Jungkook notices that he looks even paler than usual.

Taehyung is the one pointing his wand at him, this time. “Shut the fuck up! Jungkook is fucking *dying* because of you!”

A collective gasp is heard in the Great Hall; people start whispering furiously, looking at Jungkook. At the Gryffindor table, Seokjin stands up and yells, *“What?! What do you mean, dying?!*” Appleton, for his part, blinks rapidly, looking shell-shocked.

“W… What? Don’t be daft. He’s not dying. It’s just a stupid curse. It’ll disappear in time.”

For a few seconds, nobody says anything; then Jimin’s father takes a step forward.

“I suppose you won’t mind, then, Mr Appleton, if we do test your wand? Since it is just a *stupid curse.*”

Appleton’s face turns greenish. “N… No! I don’t want to…”

Before he’s able to finish his sentence, Jungkook points at the wand he just caught.

“*Colorum Revelare!*” he shouts.

His new wand is powerful; the shape that erupts is huge, floating over their heads, as dark as a storm cloud. Looking up at it, Taehyung’s face shows grim satisfaction.

“See?” he says, breaking the stunned silence. “I told you. It’s him.”

“Everyone is dismissed,” Mr Park says, expression darker than Jungkook ever remembers seeing it—darker, even, than the ominous cloud. “Everyone out. Now!”

The students don’t need to be told twice; in a matter of minutes, everyone has left the Great Hall, until there are only a few people left; Jimin and Hoseok, of course, the Chairwoman, the

Professors, the Headmaster, Seokjin, who adamantly refused to leave, and Appleton, Taehyung and Jungkook.

“In my office, Mr Appleton,” Jimin’s father declares in a frosty voice. “Right now. Chairwoman, if you would be so kind as to come with us. Jungkook, you’re coming too. The rest of you can leave.”

Jimin looks clearly annoyed. Once his father has vacated the room with Appleton, VanDecken and the other teachers, he turns to Jungkook.

“I’m coming with you,” he states firmly. “I don’t care what he says. Let’s go.”

“Wait!” Taehyung says. “You go ahead, we’ll catch up with you. I need to talk to Jungkook real quick.”

Jimin frowns. “Listen, Kim, you’re—”

“No problem!” Hoseok interrupts, grabbing Jimin’s wrist. “Come on, Jiminie. We’ll be waiting for you in front of the Headmaster’s office, Jungkook.”

“Great!” Taehyung replies instead. “Take my brother with you, too.”

Jimin and Seokjin both start protesting, but Hoseok, his hair a steely grey, drags them out of the room.

Jungkook watches them go, dumbfounded, before finally turning to Taehyung.

“Hey,” he says, smiling. “Thanks for what you did. That was quite an entrance. I can’t believe it was him, though.”

“I can,” Taehyung replies, expression dark. “He’s a nutcase. I should have told you months ago, maybe it would have ended differently.”

Jungkook frowns. “What are you talking about?”

“What happened between you?” Taehyung asks. He looks agitated, pacing in front of Jungkook and wringing his hands. “I don’t understand. Why would he cast that curse at you? Did you have a fight?”

“A fight? Taehyung, you’re not making any sense.”

“I just don’t want you to die!” Taehyung exclaims, so suddenly that Jungkook jumps. “I can’t accept it. It’s so unfair, Jungkook! Just because of a stupid curse!”

“I know,” Jungkook replies, grabbing his arm to try and calm him down. “I’m sorry, Taehyung. And I’m glad you found out who did it, but it doesn’t change anything.”

“Have you tried *everything?* Does he really know how much you love him? Did you tell him? What did he say?”

Jungkook stares at him. “Who?”

“Appleton, you pillock! What did he say?”

“What did he say when?”

There’s something he’s not quite grasping—something that’s lost in translation.

Something incredibly important.

“When you confessed!!” Taehyung yells, irritated.

“Why would I confess to Appleton?” Jungkook asks, bemused.

“Because you’re in love with him!!”

Wait.

What?!

“Taehyung,” Jungkook says softly. “I’m not in love with Appleton. I’ve *never* been in love with Appleton.”

“But… you were together… he broke up with you… and left you throwing up flowers…”

“*I* broke up with him!” Jungkook exclaims. “I could barely stand him even when I didn’t remember him. Merlin’s hairy balls, why on Earth would you think I’m in love with this psycho? Didn’t you receive my letter?”

“I did! The letter in which you told me you were in love with him!”

“*What?*”

For a moment, they just gawk at each other, speechless. Jungkook can hear his heart beating in his ears and the room feels too hot. He thinks he can almost understand, but he needs to be sure.

“Taehyung… What did that letter say?”

“Well, it… it said you were happier now that we weren’t together anymore. Because… it helped you see that you were in love with someone else. With Appleton.”

Jungkook’s jaw drops on the floor. He needs a very long amount of time to process this information.

“I never wrote that.”

“What?” Taehyung looks horrified, now, and frightened. Jungkook grips his wrist tighter. “You didn’t?”

“No. No, I didn’t. I wrote…”

Suddenly, he stops.

So, Taehyung didn't read his letter—the real letter. But if he had, would he have come? He had already broken up with him before that. Nothing has changed: Jungkook still doesn't want to offload the burden of his death, the blame of being unable to stop it, onto him.

But Taehyung moves his arm to free his wrist until he's the one squeezing Jungkook's hand, tight, and a strange, almost unhinged look has appeared in his eyes.

"Tell me," he demands. "Tell me what you wrote. Tell me, Jungkook."

Jungkook sighs. "I wrote that… fuck. I don't want to say it."

"*Tell me.*"

"I wrote that… I wasn't ok with us breaking up. And that… if maybe you had changed your mind… I asked that you meet me near the Shrieking Shack on Valentine's Day."

Taehyung gasps, eyes round as saucers. "Fuck," he murmurs. "You're joking."

A flash of pain crosses Jungkook's body when he sees Taehyung's visible dismay, and he just has time to think, *I knew it, he doesn't love me, I should haven't said anything,* before he doubles over and coughs up petals after petals, until a full flower gets out—a white rose, stained with blood, looking just like the one he gave Taehyung two days ago.

"Fuck," he gasps, on all fours, voice raspy. His throat is killing him. Quite literally.

Panting after his fit, sweat beading across his brown, he picks up the rose, sits on the steps leading to the Professors' table and closes his eyes.

"I'm sorry," he murmurs. "I'm sorry, Taehyung. Please don't feel guilty. It's not your fault."

Eyes closed, he can feel Taehyung sitting just next to him, stroking his back.

"Look at me, Jungkook," he says in a low voice, so low that Jungkook almost doesn't even hear it. "Look at me."

Opening his eyes is hard; when he does, Taehyung's beautiful face is right in front of him, brow furrowed, tears streaking his skin. He softly puts his palm on Jungkook's cheek. It's so warm.

"Do it," he murmurs. "Do it again. I didn't receive your confession the first time around. Confess to me one more time, Jungkook."

He's so close, Jungkook could almost count his pores. His gaze is drawn by the slope of his nose, by the little mole right underneath, by his red lips, his golden skin. He's breathtaking, in every sense of the word.

"You're so beautiful," Jungkook gasps, taking in the sight of his perfect features. He wants this to be the last thing he sees in this world. He wants to carve the vision behind his eyelids

and keep it with him beyond death. “I love you so much, Taehyung. I love you.”

Taehyung raises his other hand and frames Jungkook’s face with it, his intense eyes fixed on him, a strange spark of joy dancing in his pupils. When he speaks, Jungkook feels the way his breath caresses his lips. He’s not quite sure if he’s awake, or if he fainted after his fit and is in the middle of a very pleasant dream.

“I love you too,” Taehyung whispers. “Do you hear me? I love you. I love you. I’m so fucking in love with you. Please, I don’t want you to die, Jungkook. I love you.”

When their lips meet, for a quick second, nothing happens; then, it’s like a small deflagration, both in the room and in Jungkook’s body. His lungs are windows, and Taehyung just opened them with his kiss, blowing a fresh wind inside his organs, replacing the stale air with new energy.

He’s not dreaming. This is real.

He *feels* it, the flowers magically vanishing, the new space in his abdomen, the pressure and the pain going away; he can breathe in, breathe out, like he’s just been born—when he was on the verge of death a few seconds ago.

“Oh, sweet Merlin,” he whispers, his lips against Taehyung. “I can breathe. Taehyung! I can breathe!”

Taehyung leans away, an incredulous smile appearing on his mouth, and looks at Jungkook’s hand: the rose has vanished. There aren’t even ashes left; it has completely disappeared.

“You’re… You’re cured? You’re cured, Jungkookie! Right? You’re cured, right?! How do you feel?”

“Bloody fantastic,” Jungkook grins. “I feel alive.”

Because Taehyung loves him. *Taehyung* loves him. And this time—this time, he believes it.

So he kisses him again, just because he can, and the feeling of his lips against his is life running in his veins, air oxygenating his brain, new blood regrowing his damaged cells. He could almost sprout wings and fly away in the enchanted sky, thanks to Taehyung.

Still, the taste of his lips inevitably brings him back to that abandoned, dusty classroom, where he spent so many hours getting acquainted with Taehyung’s tongue.

“Why did you break up with me, though?” he finally asks when he’s able to detach his mouth from Taehyung’s for more than a few seconds. Instead, he softly puts his forehead against his and murmurs into his lips, “Did you realise only after our breakup that you were in love with me?”

“No,” Taehyung replies, frowning. “Actually, it’s because…”

But before he can finish his sentence, Hoseok and Jimin appear at the doors, at the far end of the Great Hall.

“Jungkook!” Jimin yells. “Come on, you need to come to the office right n…”

He stops when he sees them, faces a few inches from each other, and gawks at them, eyes bulging. Hoseok stops too, gaping. Then, unexpectedly, he smiles.

“You fucking liar. I knew it was him.”

Jungkook stands up, giggling. There’s a renewed vigour in his body—he feels so good, he could climb Mount Everest right now.

If Taehyung comes with him, that is.

“Yeah. Sorry. It is him.”

He extends his hand for Taehyung to take and get up, which he does. Hand in hand, palms warm against each other, they cross the Hall to join Jungkook’s friends. Jimin is watching them, eyebrows squished together, lips trembling, tears swelling up in his eyes, who look even bigger than usual.

“Does… Does that mean you’ll live? Jungkook? Does he love you too?”

“Yes,” Taehyung replies without a moment of hesitation. “Yes, I do, and yes, he will.”

“Merlin’s beard,” Jimin says in a small, shaking voice.

For a second, nothing happens; then, he throws himself at Jungkook, wrapping his arms around his neck, and Jungkook can only grip Taehyung’s hand harder to stop himself from falling backwards.

“Hey, Jiminie,” he says, patting his back. “I can breathe normally now, but that doesn’t mean you need to choke me to death.”

“Sorry,” Jimin sobs, loosening his grip on Jungkook’s neck but still not letting him go. “I can’t believe you’re cured! Are you sure it’s gone? Like, totally sure?”

“It’s gone,” Jungkook replies in a soft voice. “It’s definitely gone.”

“Brilliant,” Hoseok beams, looking suspiciously misty-eyed. “Thanks, Taehyung. For… loving him back, I guess.”

“Pleasure’s all mine,” Taehyung replies with a soft expression. “If anything, he’s the one who loved me back.”

“What?” Jungkook asks, sending a bewildered look over Jimin’s shoulder, who turns his head to send a wary look at Taehyung. “What do you mean?”

“Later,” Taehyung merely replies. “We need to go and hear what Appleton has to say. He owes us a few explanations.”

“Ah! Appleton!” Jimin exclaims, finally letting go of Jungkook, eyelashes still wet with tears. “Yeah! Let’s hear what that terminal tosser has to say!”

Without losing a second, he rushes out of the Great Hall, followed by Hoseok. Taehyung, whose hand is still firmly linked with his, gives him a smile that makes his eyes crinkle.

“Come on, Jungkookie. Let’s go,” he says, tugging on his hand.

And Jungkook can only nod, dazed by the happiness radiating from his perfect face.

Really, he would follow him everywhere.

Galaxies in your words

As they're making their way towards the Headmaster's office, Jungkook can't quite believe yet that the flowers in his lungs are really gone. He's amazed at how he's able to walk and climb stairs, without even panting. His body feels new, and Merlin, maybe he didn't really take good care of it before, but he will, now.

"I told Seokjin to go back to the Gryffindor Tower," Jimin says as they walk. "He'll want to know what happened. I think you're going to have to tell him you fancy his little brother," he adds, casting a resentful look at Taehyung—only resentful, though, and not hateful, thanks to Taehyung saving Jungkook's life a few minutes earlier. "Reckon he didn't know either," he adds, just a bit briskly.

"If you hadn't been so stubborn about hating Taehyung, maybe he would have told you," Hoseok reasons, before stopping in front of the winged gargoyle, ignoring the dark look Jimin throws him. "I don't know the password. Jimin?"

But Jungkook is quicker. "*Loyalty over royalty,*" he recites.

It does the trick; the gargoyle moves, revealing the moving staircase, and all four of them hop on the steps. When Jungkook knocks on the door, it reminds him of the last time he was here, a week—or an eternity—before.

"Enter," the Headmaster's voice replies.

Three people are already inside when they step into the room: the Headmaster and the Chairwoman, standing up, and Jordan Appleton, sitting on a chair, now looking more terrified than angry.

"Thank you for finally joining us, Mr Jeon. I was starting to wonder if something happened to you," Mr Park says, raising an eyebrow. Jungkook gives him a sheepish smile, and the Headmaster softens. "Mr Appleton was about to explain to us why he did what he did. Do you feel strong enough for that?"

Grinning, Jungkook takes Taehyung's hand and laces their fingers together.

"Better than ever, Headmaster," he replies, indicating their hands. "Totally cured. Good as new."

The three of them, with the Chairwoman and Appleton, look gobsmacked; then, when the realisation hits, a wide smile appears on Mr Park's lips, splitting his face into two.

"Really? That's wonderful news, Jungkook!' he exclaims, eyes shining brightly. "I'm incredibly relieved to know that this terrible ordeal is over and that everything will go back to normal. Nevertheless, close as you were from death, I believe Mr Appleton here still owes us an explanation. Don't you think?"

Jungkook nods adamantly—next to him, Taehyung, Jimin and Hoseok do the same.

“Very well,” the Headmaster continues. “Do you want your friends to stay here or would you rather they wait outside?”

Upon hearing his father’s words, Jimin makes a face, like he swallowed a whole lemon. Jungkook glances at Taehyung, whose drawn eyebrows indicate that he isn’t going anywhere.

“I want them here, Professor,” Jungkook replies. “Whatever Appleton is going to say, I’ll repeat to them anyway. Might as well kill two birds with one stone.”

A wry smile appears on the Headmaster’s lips, who nods.

“Very well. Let’s hear it, Mr Appleton. What on earth possessed you to think that casting a mortal spell on Mr Jeon would be a good idea?”

“I didn’t know it was mortal!” Appleton looks up at Jungkook, tears swelling up in his eyes. “I swear, Jungkook, I’m telling the truth! I didn’t know what it was. I thought it was supposed to…”

“To what?” the Headmaster presses when the rest of it doesn’t come.

Appleton shakes his head, biting his lips. He looks so miserable Jungkook pities him for a second—it’s easier, now that he’s not dying anymore, but he doesn’t intend to forget what almost happened to him because of Appleton, who still doesn’t look like he wants to reply.

“Mr Appleton,” Mr Park says, “if you don’t want to tell us, it’s your choice.” Jungkook frowns, but the Headmaster is not finished. “However, this matter is of such gravity that I will have to call on the Aurors if you don’t, and I assure you, you won’t like their methods. What will it be, then?”

A small sob escapes Appleton, who hides his face in his hands. “Alright! I’ll tell you. I was just… I was just jealous! It was supposed to be a harmless joke, nothing more!”

“Jealous?” the Headmaster frowns. “Why were you jealous?”

“Because I was fucking in love with him!” Appleton spits.

Jungkook shivers. He’s not sure he knows what’s worse between coughing up flowers until death ensues or being loved by Appleton. He didn’t mind when he didn’t remember him, but knowing what he knows now, the very thought of it makes him nauseous.

“With Jungkook?” Mr Park asks, raising an eyebrow. “Do you make it a habit cursing the people you’re in love with, Mr Appleton?”

Appleton raises his head, blushing. “O-Of course not! I just wanted a bit of attention from him. I wanted to make him see me, or something like that. I don’t know! But he was head over heels for Kim fucking Taehyung.”

While Hoseok glares at Appleton, Jimin scowls at Taehyung, who doesn't even seem to notice it, visibly too busy trying not to throw himself at Appleton and strangle him, or curse him to death, judging by the way his wand is shaking in his fist.

"I saw them together one day," Appleton continues, "kissing in the Slytherin dungeons in the middle of the night, and I got so… so enraged. I've loved him for years, and he goes and chooses Kim Taehyung? The racist creep who used to call him a mudblood when we were younger?"

Around the room, the others glance at Taehyung, who looks away, his anger dissolving into shame, and Jungkook can't help but wrap his hand around his wrist to comfort him. They talked about this, he remembers—talked about it at length, first in Potions, then in their abandoned classroom, Taehyung apologising again and again for his cruel behaviour and words, Jungkook choosing to believe he was honest and giving him a chance.

However, out of everything Appleton said, this part is not what gets Jimin's attention.

"*What?!*" he exclaims, eyebrows shooting up. "You were *together?!"*

"Yes. I'll explain everything later," Jungkook replies, chin jerking towards Appleton. "I want to hear what he has to say first. What then?"

Jimin's eyes are bulging, but he doesn't add anything—for now. But Jungkook is sure he will complain later, at length, about why Jungkook never told him about it.

"I was… I was so fucking angry," Appleton mumbles. "I've been trying for so long, greeting you, being nice, and you didn't even see me. You saw *Taehyung.* So… So I told Professor Kim about them. I knew he would do something about it," he adds, looking up at the Headmaster, "because he hated Jungkook so much."

"So it *was* you," Taehyung says, eyes darker than ever. "You fucking piece of shit!"

Jungkook turns to his boyfriend (maybe boyfriend? He's not quite sure what they are yet) and looks at him with wide eyes. "What? Taehyung, did your father know about us?"

"Yeah," Taehyung mutters, biting his lower lip. "He confronted me about it when he came back from home after the winter hols. He was completely furious. Told me if I didn't break up with you, he would send me to Durmstrang and then I wouldn't be able to see you at all."

"*What?!* Why didn't you tell me?!" Jungkook turns to him, gripping his wrist tighter.

"I… I don't know… I thought your Gryffindor arse wouldn't understand if I told you I was breaking up with you because he threatened me. I thought you'd tell me to resist and go against him, and I… I wasn't ready for that yet. I know he's—not a good person, but… he's still my father… and he would have sent me away anyway, and I wanted to stay at Hogwarts with you…"

"Taehyung…"

“You’re legally adult, now, Mr Kim,” the Headmaster declares with a deep frown. “If you didn’t want to leave Hogwarts, your father couldn’t have forced you to go.”

“It’s not about being a legal adult,” Taehyung shakes his head. “It’s about standing up to your family. My mum and my dad were devastated when Seokjin left. All the love they had for him, they transferred to me. And… And I needed it, their love. I… I didn’t want to be a disappointment to them. I didn’t want them to turn their back on me like they did with Seokjin. I wasn’t even sure Jungkook had feelings for me… When I told you I wanted to break up,” he adds, turning to Jungkook to look at him, eyes shining with unshed tears, “you shrugged and said ‘*ok*’, so I thought you didn’t care all that much in the end.”

Jungkook gapes at him, heart beating fast in his chest, feeling so dizzy, all of a sudden, that he has to hold onto Taehyung’s shoulders to stand upright.

“You… You should have told me,” he whispers. “You should have told me, Taehyung.”

“It was a test,” Taehyung replies in a low voice. “The most stupid kind of test, I realise it now, but… Cause, see, I’ve been…” He looks around him, at Jimin watching him like a hawk, at Appleton glaring at him, at Hoseok, the Headmaster and the Chairwoman, all silently listening, and he shakes his head, as if he was suddenly deciding it didn’t matter anymore, after what they just went through. “I’ve been in love with you for years. *Years.* And you hated me, you and Jimin—and I get why, I do. I wasn’t the nicest to you when we were kids. I was a prick. I was so amazed by you, and so, so jealous, too, because my father kept telling me that as a pureblood, it was my duty to be better than you, and I couldn’t, because… well, because you’re you, and you’re amazing.”

Jungkook’s heart is beating like crazy in his chest. They never talked about that, before. Never talked about their feelings. And now, Taehyung is opening his heart, for the first time, and Jungkook is catching a glimpse of galaxies inside, and he wants to dive into it—float around the stars that make up Kim Taehyung.

“I was in love with you,” Taehyung continues, “and you hated me. Up until sixth year, when Jimin left the Potions class and you needed a partner, so I jumped at the chance, tried to show you my funny side, tried to make you laugh, to make you forget how obnoxious I was with you before, and to my great surprise, it worked. The first time you kissed me, I felt so elated, and also so anxious that it wouldn’t last, so terrified that you would get tired of me. You never said how you felt about me.”

Jungkook is staring at him, gaping—all this time, Taehyung was afraid of the same thing, and he never knew?

Shaking his head, Taehyung continues. “We kissed, and it was great, but I lived in the constant worry that you’d come up to me one day and tell me you wanted to stop. So… when my father told me I had to break up with you… I didn’t want you to know, because I just couldn’t risk you saying ‘well let’s just break things off then, I can’t let you go to Durmstrang’ as if what we had didn’t matter. So I thought of a plan. A stupid Slytherin plan, because I just couldn’t ask you straightaway about your feelings for me, I was too terrified. I decided to tell you I wanted to break up, and then make a decision depending on your reaction. I thought that if you loved me, you wouldn’t let me do it, you’d try to understand.

You'd give me a reason to go against my dad. And if you didn't… well, either way, I would have an answer."

Jungkook gulps, his cheeks wet with tears, heart pounding, fingers cold. "Slytherins," he hears Jimin murmur, shaking his head, and Merlin but he agrees with him. *Slytherins.*

"You're a bloody idiot," he says, voice trembling. "What made you think it was a good idea?"

Taehyung shrugs. "I *knew* it wasn't one. I was just too scared to do anything else."

"But then… The letter, in February," Jungkook whispers, before turning to look at Appleton, reality finally dawning on him. "That was you, right?"

Appleton glances at the Headmaster and the Chairwoman, who are both frowning deeply.

"I advise you to tell the truth, Mr Appleton," the Chairwoman says. "You might not be able to avoid expulsion, but I'm sure you'd prefer not to end up in court or Azkaban."

Appleton gasps, eyes wide, then lowers his head and nods bashfully. "Yeah, it was me."

"What letter?" Jimin asks. "What are you talking about?"

"Jungkook wrote a letter to him," Appleton replies. "I saw him put it in his bag during Potions. I waited until we both got back to the dorm. There, I stole it, read it… and I wrote something else, forging his handwriting with a spell."

"Right," Taehyung snarls, before turning to Mr Park. "It said our relationship helped him see he didn't feel anything for me, but that he was in love with Appleton instead."

"What did the real letter say?" the Headmaster asks.

"Jungkook told Taehyung he loved him and asked him to meet in front of the Shrieking Shack if he had feelings for him," Appleton replies in a low voice. "He waited for him there, in the snow, for hours. I was there, watching from afar, mad with jealousy."

This time, it's Taehyung's turn to gape at Jungkook. "What? You… You waited for hours in the cold, for me? Didn't it occur to you that I might not have read the letter at all?"

"I charmed it to know if you did… or if *someone* did," Jungkook replies. "And it had been opened. By you, I thought. Funniest thing is, I did think about charming it so you'd be the only one who could open it. But then I figured that if I put it directly inside your bag, no one else would read it, you know? Except not." He turns to glare at Appleton, who shrugs.

"All's fair in love and war," he replies. "So there I was, near the Shrieking Shack, watching you, thinking, now's my chance, he must know by now that Taehyung won't come. Time to make him realise he needs someone else. I'd be the knight in shining armour making him forget about his lost love. But you wouldn't even give me the time of day. I was so furious. That's… That's when I cast the curse."

“Let’s talk about that curse,” the Chairwoman says. “It’s an ancient Japanese curse, and not many people know about its existence. Where did you find it?”

Appleton takes his time to reply, head lowered. “In… In a book about Asian spells and curses that I found in the Slytherin common room. There was a bookmark, so I opened at that page, and the book mentioned Hanahaki. It said it was a curse destined to make someone cough up flowers when they were in love with someone. It was such a weird curse, it intrigued me. Made me think of Jungkook. I wondered what would happen if he got hit by the spell.” He looks up, lips trembling. “It’s true, I’m the one who cast it, but I thought it was an innocent jinx. I didn’t know it was fatal, I swear! Plus, it didn’t even work at the time! I cast it, and nothing happened at all. After a while, he went back to the castle, so I thought it had failed. It was only when I saw him coughing up flowers in Potions a week ago that I thought maybe it *had* worked, in the end. And it looked so violent, I got scared. I tried to cast *Finite Incantatem* when he wasn’t looking, but it didn’t do anything. I even searched the library to find a way to lift it, but I couldn’t find a single book mentioning it. If I knew how dangerous it was, I wouldn’t have cast it, I swear!”

“Do you believe that?” Mr Park turns to ask Jungkook.

It’s a loaded question; Appleton’s fate probably depends on his answer. Jungkook isn’t quite sure what to say yet.

“It’s not the only thing you’ve done, casting the curse,” Jungkook says to Appleton. “You tried to manipulate me, too. You took advantage of my memory loss and tried to make me believe I was in love with you.”

Next to him, Taehyung is livid, shaking with rage, but he doesn’t say anything. Appleton looks at Jungkook, panic flashing in his gaze.

“I never made you believe it! I merely suggested it could be true. I mean, you can’t blame me for trying my luck!”

“I can,” Taehyung mutters, tone as dark as his eyes.

“And I let you go when you said you wanted to break up!”

“Yes, after insulting me six ways to Sunday.” Jungkook raises an eyebrow. “I don’t know if someone ever told you that, but cursing, manipulating and insulting the one you fancy won’t get you very far.”

“Well, it worked for him!” Appleton exclaims, jerking his chin at Taehyung. “He did nothing else for years!”

“And I apologised for that!” Taehyung snaps. “Where’s your apology? You don’t get it, do you? Jungkookie almost *died* because of you! The least you could do is to tell him you’re sorry!”

Appleton glances at Jungkook, lips pursed, and for a moment, Jungkook is quite certain he won’t say anything at all; whatever love he felt for him, it must all have turned to hatred,

because that is what's written in his eyes: dark, pure hatred, for the both of them.

But the threat of going to Azkaban must still be at the forefront of his mind, because he finally lowers his gaze. "I'm sorry," he finally mumbles, words barely understandable. "I didn't mean for that to happen."

As excuses go, it's rather weak, but Jungkook doesn't need more; he's tired of this conversation, tired of looking at him. Feeling the other's gazes on him, he nods. Immediately, the Headmaster steps towards Appleton.

"Very well," he says. "I think Mrs VanDecken and the rest of the Governors will agree with me when I say you're expelled from Hogwarts, Mr Appleton."

While the Chairwoman nods in approval, Appleton stares at Mr Park, mouth wide open.

"Y… You can't *expel* me, Sir!" he protests. "I mean, it was reckless, but nothing happened! He's still alive!"

"No thanks to you!" Jimin pipes, looking more furious than Jungkook has even seen him. "He spent months coughing up flowers, spitting out blood! Do you have any idea how painful it was? His throat was so sore, he couldn't even eat!"

In fact, it still is—Jungkook didn't take his usual potion after his last fit, and although the flowers have disappeared, the ache in his throat lingers. But he knows it will go away for good as soon as he'll swallow Madam Pomfrey's miraculous elixir. Still, everyone is looking at him with various degrees of astonishment and pity; and horror, in Taehyung's case, who grips his hand and squeezes it so hard Jungkook almost lets out a cry of pain.

"*Months?!*" he murmurs, so low Jungkook almost doesn't catch it.

"I'm sorry," Appleton repeats, biting his lower lip—and this time, he sounds like he means it.

"If Mr Jeon wants to press charges," the Headmaster says, "you won't stand a chance in court, unless you find yourself a very talented solicitor. Just letting you know."

"I don't," Jungkook replies, slightly grimacing at the pain in his hand, making a face at Taehyung. "It's too much of a hassle, and I don't want my parents to know about this. As long as he's expelled and I never have to see him again, it's fine with me."

"Good," Mr Park replies. "Well then, this is effective immediately. Chairwoman VanDecken will get in touch with your parents, Mr Appleton. You can go back to your dorm and pack your belongings. Go on."

In deep, suffocating silence, Appleton stands up. He looks a bit dazed, and Jungkook understands. That's how he feels too. So many things have happened today, he's not even entirely sure he isn't dreaming.

But Taehyung is here holding his hand, so it's not such a bad dream altogether.

"I'm sorry," Appleton repeats one last time when he passes him, not even looking at him.

Then, he's out of the office, and as soon as he disappears, Jungkook feels relieved of a weight he didn't even know was on his shoulders.

"Merlin," he lets out a sigh, wiping the sweat on his brow with his free hand. "It's over."

It's like he doesn't know what to do with himself, suddenly. His future was blocked by a wall, a very real, very solid wall, towards which he was hurtling at full speed, and just as he was about to hit it, the wall vanished, and he passed through the other side. He feels like the first time he crossed the barrier leading to Platform 9¾, and now, just as then, a new life is waiting for him.

The Chairwoman congratulates him before leaving the office; his friends pat him on the shoulder, elated, and Jimin's father lets go of his Headmaster persona, for a brief moment, to crush Jungkook in his arms.

"I'm so happy you didn't die, Jungkook," he says, voice trembling. Then, he holds out a hand towards Taehyung, who's obligated to let Jungkook go. "Thank you, Taehyung. You saved his life."

Jungkook can't help chuckling when he sees Taehyung turning bright red. It's a good look on him, too.

"I'm going to tell Jinnie!" Jimin exclaims, his smile brighter than Jungkook ever remembers it being. "And then, to the kitchens! This calls for a celebration!"

"It's barely noon," Hoseok points out, raising an eyebrow, his hair a wonderful rainbow colour to display his joy.

"I was too worried to eat this morning. And I'm sure Jungkook is famished too."

"Lunch will be served soon," Jimin's father tells them. "Since it's Friday, I'll give you permission to celebrate tonight, I'll even provide the food if you want, but *only* if you attend your afternoon classes as usual. Do we have a deal?"

Jimin grumbles, but eventually nods, and leaves the office, followed by his boyfriend and his father. Jungkook, before exiting the room too and going on with the rest of his life, turns towards Taehyung and holds out his hand for him to take. The other boy doesn't hesitate a second, lacing his fingers with Jungkook's and coming closer to him, a soft smile playing on his lips.

"I don't understand why you were sick at all," he murmurs, nuzzling Jungkook's hair with his pretty nose. "I've been in love with you for years. It's always been reciprocal."

"It didn't count as long as I didn't believe it," Jungkook replies softly, chasing the warmth of his skin with his lips. "According to Yoongi. That's why I kept coughing up flowers yesterday, even though you told me you loved me. I thought you meant as a friend."

Taehyung pulls away and watches him intently.

"But you believe me now, right? You believe that I love you?"

“Yes, Taehyung. And I hope you believe me too.”

“Well,” Taehyung grins, “since you’re *assuring* me that you’re not in love with Appleton…”

“Gross,” Jungkook shivers. “You should kiss me now, just to make up for pronouncing his name at all.”

“Your wish is my command,” Taehyung murmurs, capturing Jungkook’s lips and heart.

I’m alive, he thinks, savouring the feeling of Taehyung’s soft mouth against his.

I’m more alive than ever before.

☆☆☆

Naturally, it doesn’t take two hours for the whole school to know that Appleton was expelled, that Jungkook isn’t dying anymore, and that the one who saved his life with love is none other than Kim Taehyung, his greatest rival, his arch-nemesis; it’s enough for the students to go wild. The morning classes were cancelled, but the afternoon ones aren’t, and as Jungkook makes his way, Taehyung’s hand in his, towards the dungeons for their Double-Potions lesson, numerous people clap him on the shoulder, saying how happy they are that he’s cured, or watch them pass by hand in hand with flabbergasted looks, giggles, and some jealous glares and stifled sobs too.

Professor Dillingus looks incredibly moved, if the way he clasps Jungkook’s hands in his for a few seconds, in silence, is any indication.

“I’m happy you’re doing better, Mr Jeon,” he says in a slightly trembling voice. “I was very worried about you.”

Of course, no one is able to focus on the lesson, not even the teacher himself, who keeps coming to Jungkook and Taehyung’s table while they’re brewing their potion, pulling up a stool to sit next to them and telling Jungkook everything he wants to hear about Hermione Granger. They’re making a simple enough Calming Draught, today, that they weren’t even supposed to brew in pairs, but Taehyung insisted because he didn’t want Jungkook to sit too far away from him—in other words, on the other side of the aisle.

“I couldn’t sleep last night,” he confesses to Jungkook once they’re out of the classroom and making their way towards the Room of Requirement, where the party the Headmaster allowed them to throw is to take place. “I was so terrified. How long have you known you were dying?”

“Since we searched for information about the curse,” Jungkook replies, squeezing his hand tenderly. “It took days. God, if wizards had the Internet, it would have been so much easier!”

“What’s the Internet?” Taehyung looks up at him, curious.

“You’ll see,” Jungkook smiles. “Because I’ll definitely bring it to the wizarding world, now. Anyway, it took days, and we found only one book in the whole library that talked about the curse, and it said it was fatal if the feelings weren’t reciprocated.”

“I was so stupid,” Taehyung whispers. “I was so stupid, Jungkook. If I’d told you from the start how I felt about you, you wouldn’t have been sick.”

Jungkook stops dead in his tracks, in the middle of the hallway, and grips Taehyung’s shoulder.

“You’re *absolutely* not to blame, Taehyung. Do you hear me? *Appleton* is the one who cast the curse. And… I didn’t tell you, either. I mean, I tried, with the letter, but… I should have known better. I should have been brave enough to tell you directly.”

“We were terrified,” Taehyung replies in a low voice. “We were scared. It’s easy to regret the way it happened afterwards, but at the time… I just couldn’t bear the thought of being rejected by you.”

“Neither did I,” Jungkook whispers.

“But you still wrote that letter. You waited for me, for hours, in the snow, in the cold. I’m so sorry, Jungkook. I’m sorry I made you think I didn’t love you. You know, even if I didn’t feel anything for you, I would have gone there to tell you that. I wouldn’t have let you wait. It’s too cruel a thing to do. You know that, right?”

“I didn’t, then,” Jungkook says, giving him a pained smile. “But it doesn’t matter, because you do love me. Right?”

“I do love you,” Taehyung nods. “Merlin, you can’t even begin to imagine. I love you, Jungkook.”

He raises his hand to cup Jungkook’s cheek, softly, eyes full to the brim with love and warmth, and leans in to kiss him, not minding the catcalls that ring out around them when other students pass them by. Neither of them gives a damn about that. Escaping death, it seems, does put a lot in perspective.

“Urgh, gross,” Jimin’s disgusted voice interrupts them a few minutes later. “Is this how it’s always going to be, now? You two joined at the hip, kissing in every part of the castle?”

Smiling, Jungkook looks up; his friend is coming up to him, levitating food in front of him, followed by Hoseok, who’s carrying bottles of what looks like Butterbeers.

“Like you and Hoseok weren’t all over each other in fourth year,” Jungkook reminds him. “How do you think it made me feel?”

“We never kissed in hallways!”

“We so did,” Hoseok giggles, while Jimin glares at him. “But never when there were people around, admittedly.”

“I almost *died.* I don’t give a fuck about what people think anymore. Besides, the whole school knows we’re together, now.” Then, his heart jumps in his chest, and he turns to Taehyung. “We’re together, right?”

Taehyung rolls his eyes and shakes his head, looking both annoyed and fond. “You think I’d let you go, now that I finally got you? Think again.”

“Urgh,” Jimin says, looking nauseous. “Stop it, I’m going to puke. I can’t believe you were *together* and that you didn’t even tell me. I’m your best friend!”

“I can,” Hoseok mutters. “You wouldn’t stop complaining about Taehyung. Of course he would keep it from you.”

Jimin looks outraged, for a moment, before he shakes his head, a contrite expression across his face.

“Ok. I suppose you’re right. I’m sorry I made you feel like you couldn’t talk to me about it.”

Jungkook nods, touched, but Jimin isn’t finished.

“Still, it’ll take some getting used to, seeing you two together. *Kim Taehyung!* Seriously. You could have picked *anyone.*”

Next to him, Taehyung straightens up, and for a wild moment, Jungkook thinks he’s going to draw his wand to jinx him, as exasperated as Jungkook himself is by his scornful disapproval. But then, to his immense surprise, Taehyung holds out a hand.

“I’m sorry,” he says. “I want to apologise for what I’ve said, and what I’ve done. I don’t believe in blood purity anymore. Not when the most talented wizard I know is muggle-born,” he adds, glancing at Jungkook, who blushes. “I’m sorry I believed my father's lies and acted on them. I was an entitled prick. I understand why you hate me, but I suppose we’re going to see a lot of each other in the future, so it would be brilliant if you found it in your heart to forgive me.”

A deep silence falls in the hallway. Jimin is speechless, eyes as round as saucers, so shocked at Taehyung’s sudden apology that the food he’s levitating starts falling on the ground, and he hastily casts a new charm to stop it from crashing down. Hoseok, for his part, looks stunned, but a pleased smile is playing on his lips. Jungkook, who’s staring at Taehyung, feels a tsunami of love and affection overwhelm his heart, rush through his veins. He’s so proud of him.

“O… Ok,” Jimin stutters finally, tentatively taking Taehyung’s hand to shake it. “Apology accepted. I still don’t like you, but… I forgive you.”

“I’ll make you like me,” Taehyung says in a serious voice. “In time.”

Jungkook grabs his wrist, frowning. “Not too much, though.”

“You really don’t have to worry about me liking Kim Taehyung *too much,*” Jimin says, but this time, he’s smiling. “Come on, let’s go prep the Room. A lot of people are coming,

apparently."

Luckily, when the Room of Requirement opens, it's *huge*. Not quite as huge as the Great Hall, but still a very decent size to party all night—which Jungkook very much intends to do, even though he doesn't even like parties that much. For once, he's willing to make an exception. Especially if Taehyung is here with him.

By the time they're done bringing food and drinks into the Room and arranging the tables, chairs and sofas, people are starting to show up. Slowly, the place is filling, to the point that Jungkook thinks half the school, at least, must be there. There are even some teachers, like Professor Dillingus, wriggling on the dance floor and looking like he's having the time of his life; Jimin's father is here, too, inspecting the drinks with a frown; but when his gaze meets Jungkook's, he gives him a wink.

There's also Namjoon, who came to congratulate Jungkook and Taehyung on beating the curse.

"So, when you told me you felt like dying… you meant it literally, didn't you?" he asks, frowning.

"Yeah," Jungkook grimaces.

Namjoon shakes his head. "Well. Can't say how glad I am you don't feel like that anymore."

"Tell me about it," Jungkook weakly chuckles.

They chat for a moment, then Namjoon, always the Head Boy, leaves to go tell the youngest, most excited party-goers to dial it down. Jungkook also spots Yoongi, chatting with Hoseok and Jimin, all of them sitting on a sofa and sipping drinks.

And, of course, Seokjin is here too.

"Jungkook! Taehyung!"

Upon hearing the booming voice behind them, both of them exchange a terrified look. *This is it,* Jungkook thinks. *We're doing this.*

Slipping his hand in Taehyung's, Jungkook turns towards Seokjin, who's marching towards them with a stormy look on his face. Taehyung audibly gulps.

"You!" Seokjin growls, pointing at Jungkook. "How could you not *tell me* you were *dying*?! How could you not tell me that it was *him* you were in love with?!"

His scowl is so impressive that even though Jungkook knows how kind Seokjin is, he can't help tensing up. He's never seen him so mad.

But then, Seokjin completely throws him off.

"If you'd told me, I would have told you right away he loved you back!!"

Jungkook gapes. “*This* is what you’re angry about? That I didn’t tell you? Not the fact that I’m in love with your brother?”

“Please,” Seokjin huffs. “He’s my *brother*. Half of the school is in love with him. It’s only natural you’d fall for him too.”

“I thought half of the school was in love with you and the other half with me,” Jungkook points out in a teasing tone, relaxing a bit.

“Let’s say it’s one third each, then,” Seokjin replies, looking thoughtful. “Or maybe, forty percent for me, thirty for you, and thirty for Taehyung. Anyway! That’s not the point. You should have told me, Jungkook! I could have spared you weeks of suffering.”

“How would you have even known?” Taehyung asks, frowning. “I never told you about my feelings for him.”

“Please,” Seokjin repeats, rolling his eyes in the exact same way Taehyung did earlier when Jungkook asked if they were together. Brothers, and all that. “I’ve got eyes. And ears. When we started talking again, when you were in third year, you wouldn’t shut up about him. Always asking me questions, always watching him, always wanting to be better than him. At first, I thought it was just because of your rivalry, but you already fancied him back then, didn’t you?”

Heart racing, Jungkook turns to look at Taehyung, whose face is flaming red.

“I… I…” he stammers.

“This is why you agreed to reconnect with me, didn’t you?” Seokjin adds. “Because I provided you with fresh intel on Jeon Jungkook. Isn’t it?”

“N-No!” Taehyung stammers. “I missed my big brother!”

“Yeah, maybe,” Seokjin shrugs. “But not only. You’re not fooling me in the least. So, you see, Jungkook? This is why you should have told me.”

“I’m sorry, Seokjin,” Jungkook replies. “I’m sorry I kept you out of the loop. I wasn’t sure how well you’d take the news that I fancied your little brother.”

“It’s alright,” Seokjin replies, leaning in to hug him. “I’m just glad you’re alive. And I’m glad you finally found each other,” he adds, straightening up—and in the dim light of the party, Jungkook can see his eyes shining with tears. “My adopted little brother with my real little brother! You look really good together, you know?”

“Thank you,” Jungkook replies, smiling, at the same time Taehyung mumbles, “We know.”

In the end, Seokjin leaves to get a drink; that’s when Jungkook turns to Taehyung, to ask the question that he can’t stop thinking about.

“Third year? You’ve been in love with me since *third year*, Taehyung?”

Taehyung blushes and shrugs. “Well, yes. He’s right—I did reconnect with him partly because I wanted him to tell me things about you.”

Merlin, Jungkook thinks, stunned. His fingers are tingling.

“But… you hated me.”

“I never really *hated* you,” Taehyung replies softly. “I was incredibly jealous of you, because you were everything my father wanted me to be. I was jealous, in the beginning, but one day…”

“Yes?” Jungkook prompts when he stops, staring at him avidly. “One day?”

“One day… one evening, you were coming back to the castle after a Quidditch session with your team, and you passed right by me, and… you were beautiful. Your hair was damp and sticking up, your neck was sweaty, you were laughing with your teammates. I couldn’t really understand beauty, back then. It wasn’t something I saw when I looked at people. But that night, I saw it on you. I finally *got* it. I *understood* it, as a concept. And then, I started to see it on others, too, but… you were always different. You weren’t just beautiful to me, you were *beauty*.”

Jungkook can feel his blood pounding in his temples. He’s gaping at Taehyung, mind bubbling, veins singing.

“I became obsessed with you,” Taehyung continues in a low voice, uncaring about the effect he’s producing on Jungkook. “I wanted to spend my days looking at you. It was very innocent, at first… Up until the day I caught a seventh-year kissing his boyfriend in a hallway. It was a shock—or rather, a catalyst. It opened a new door in my mind. I started to wonder what kissing you would feel like. I couldn’t stop thinking about it. And I was angry at myself, because we were supposed to be enemies, because you were my rival. I told myself to endure, that it would pass, eventually. That I would stop feeling what I felt for you, and then I’d be free.”

Jungkook is unable to do anything else than stare at him. If he moves, his whole being will explode. He stands still and watches Taehyung pour out galaxies from his mouth.

“But you grew more and more beautiful, with each passing day, and it grew worse. It was all I could do to pretend I hated you, while in fact, I wanted to grab your arm and drag you into a classroom and snog the hell out of you. When Dillingus paired us up, during that first Potions lesson, at the beginning of the year… I thought I won at life. And when *you* kissed me… Jungkook, I…”

“I love you,” Jungkook cuts, before passionately kissing him. “I love you, I love you, I *love you.*”

“I love you too,” Taehyung replies between his lips, his breath mingling with Jungkook’s, tears rolling down his cheeks. “I’ve loved you for years. This was why it was so hard for me to tell you. I cried the whole week when I got your letter… I mean, Appleton’s letter. I spent Valentine’s Day crying in my bed, while you were waiting for me in Hogsmeade.”

“Fucking Appleton,” Jungkooks growls, wiping Taehyung’s tears with his nose, all the while feeling his own escaping from his eyes. “I can’t believe I was dying of love for you while you were pining after me.”

“I was so scared,” Taehyung says, letting out a small sob. “I was so scared you’d die. I was so *scared,* Jungkook. I don’t know how I’m ever going to be able to let you out of my sight anymore. I’m so scared something else will happen to you and you’ll be gone for good.”

“It won’t,” Jungkook whispers, kissing his damp cheeks, his hands on Taehyung’s nape. “I won’t go anywhere. I promise you.”

“Will you sleep in my bed tonight?” Taehyung asks, looking up at Jungkook, wet eyelashes stuck together. “Not… I mean, I don’t have ulterior motives,” he adds, blushing. “I just want you close.”

“Of course. I’m not sure I’ll be able to let you go either,” he sighs, before adding with a smile: “And I wouldn’t mind if you had ulterior motives. Not at all. *I*’ve got ulterior motives.”

“Oh,” Taehyung lets out softly, eyes widening. “Ok, then. Good.”

“Good,” Jungkook nods, smiling. “I love you.”

“I love you too.”

Forever.

Epilogue: Life ever after

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jungkook is lying on his back, eyes closed, face warmed up by the sun. The air smells like freshly-cut grass, lake water, and Taehyung's perfume. He inhales deeply, savouring the fact that he can, now, without feeling any pain, and lets the scents merge in the deepest recesses of his flower-free lungs.

He's alive. It's been a month, now, but he can't get accustomed to the fact that he's *alive*. When he opens his eyes, the endless sky stretches above him, without a cloud in sight; when he turns his head, Taehyung is there, lying on the grass just next to him, watching him.

"Don't ogle me like that," Jungkook smiles. "It's creepy."

Of course, he doesn't mean a word of what he's saying; in fact, he would love to keep Taehyung's gaze fixed on him for the rest of his days. Luckily, Taehyung doesn't feel like listening to him.

"You're beautiful," he whispers.

Jungkook's heart misses a beat, and he blushes furiously. "*You're* beautiful," he corrects. "You're perfect."

"*You're* perfect."

Jungkook swats his arm gently. "Stop stealing my adjectives. Find your own."

"You started stealing mine first. But if I must," Taehyung sighs. "You're pretty. You're amazing. You're gorgeous."

Cheeks flaming, Jungkook straightens up, leaning on his elbows. "Now you're just teasing," he says, shaking his head.

"I'm not teasing. This is my unabashed truth. I love you."

It's not so much out of embarrassment, but rather because his heart is bursting at the seams with love, that Jungkook leans in and captures his lips.

He knows why Taehyung does this: he's terrified of the flowers growing back in Jungkook's lungs, and tells him every chance he gets how much he's in love with him—has been since third year—will be until the end of his life.

Jungkook gets it. More days than not, he feels a phantom pain in his throat, his trachea, and sometimes, the mere memory of coughing up flowers is enough to make him suffocate. In those moments, Taehyung is always there, his arm around his back, stroking him gently,

waiting for the crisis to pass. *Inhale,* he says. *Exhale. Inhale. Exhale. You're doing good, Jungkook. I love you. I love you. I love you.*

Weeks later, he still doesn't know how he managed to live through all of that—but he also doesn't know how Taehyung did either. He was the one who had to watch the boy he loved coughing up his lungs in class, or across the Great Hall, learning that it was because he was *madly in love* and believing, after one fake letter, that it was with someone else. He was the one who felt his heart breaking into shards when asked by a memory-less Jungkook if it wasn't him, knowing for a fact that it *wasn't*. He was the one who felt both happy and disheartened when Jungkook started to date his Great Love, Appleton—and then furious, thinking Appleton had broken up with him and left him to his fate. He was the one who watched him wither away, every day weaker, every day paler, every day gaunter, becoming the shadow of the boy he fell in love with, of the man he was growing to be.

He was the one who had to hear the terrible truth, the one thing he was dreading the most, confirmed: he was dying. Wishing it was him Jungkook was so in love with, so he could save him.

Taehyung is as traumatised as he is, Jungkook knows. This is why he's so openly admitting his feelings, now, terrified of any misunderstanding that could arise. This is why he still won't let Jungkook out of his sight, too frightened to find him in the hospital wing again.

This is why he severed all ties with his father, after Appleton confessed to the Headmaster, two days after his expulsion, that he lied about finding the curse in a book: that it was in fact Professor Kim who told him about it. The two of them were close, he'd explained, sharing a fascination for dark or unusual spells, and often had long conversations about it in the teacher's office. A few days after Appleton had tattled to him about his son and Jeon Jungkook, Professor Kim had told him about the curse, explaining to him how it worked, even showing him how to cast it (which he normally never did). Saying it was a very rare and fascinating charm. Leaving some very important details out of the picture—like the fact that it was impossible to call off, and fatal in the long run.

When the Headmaster had asked Appleton why he didn't say anything when he was interrogated, he'd replied that he didn't want to incriminate Professor Kim because he thought he might be able to stop his favourite student from being expelled if it came to that.

But when the sentence became a certainty, Professor Kim flatly refused to intervene, and Appleton didn't have a reason to keep his mouth shut anymore.

"Penny for your thoughts," Taehyung murmurs, looking at him.

"I'm thinking about your father," Jungkook replies, taking his hand, because he knows the topic will upset him; but they promised each other total honesty. "I still can't believe he did that. He knew what the curse would do, he saw that I was dying, and he didn't lift a finger. He *wanted* me dead."

It turned out Appleton was right; Professor Kim didn't even try to hide it when Mr Park confronted him about it. *All I did was talk to a student about an interesting spell,* he'd said. *I cannot be held responsible for what the student does with the knowledge I give him.*

It was the wrong answer.

As expected, a flash of anger crosses Taehyung's face. "He's not my father anymore," he says in a cold voice Jungkook knows very well, having had it directed at him for years.

"Don't you miss him?" Jungkook asks softly. "I know you loved him."

"I don't want to miss him," Taehyung says in a low voice, so low Jungkook barely catches it above the whisper of the breeze. "I'm so fucking enraged at him. But… I do, a bit. I can't help it. And it's going to be so weird, in two weeks, when school ends and I have to go back there to grab my stuff."

Of course, after the revelation, Taehyung had decided not to stay in his house anymore, if his father was going to be there; but before Jungkook could offer his own home as a refuge, Namjoon had come to the rescue, saying that it was only natural that Taehyung should come to live with him, since his big brother was already there.

"I'll go with you," Jungkook assures. "I'll just wait outside with Jimin's father."

The Headmaster had been absolutely outraged by his teacher's attitude; he'd called a board meeting, and two days later, Mr Kim was no longer a Professor at Hogwarts, to Jungkook's relief—and well as many other muggle-born students in the school.

"It's going to be fine," Jungkook continues, stroking the thin skin on Taehyung's wrist. "We'll go grab your stuff, and then we'll go back to my parents' place and I'll introduce you to them. And then, we're all going to Jimin's place."

Jungkook, actually, had no intention of telling his parents what had happened to him; but he didn't take into account the fact that the school board, namely Ella VanDecken, would forget that they didn't know and write a letter to them, telling them they were probably very angry about the whole situation, but that Jungkook was a lot better now and that the student and teacher responsible had both been expelled from the school, which was presenting its most sincere excuses.

Of course, Jungkook's parents had panicked and tried to contact Jungkook the only way they could, since they didn't have owls to send: by asking the witch living in their town if they could use her Floo powder, which resulted in both their heads suddenly appearing in the Gryffindor Tower's fireplace and scaring the crap out of the studying fifth and seventh-years.

Jungkook, who was in the Slytherin common room at the time, had been called urgently and had had to run through the whole castle and seven flights of stairs before being able to calm his parents down, all while panting.

The day after, upon hearing what had transpired, the Headmaster had invited them to come to his office, Side-Along Apparating them in Hogwarts, and explained the situation, with Jungkook at his side. They were so devastated to learn that their only son had almost died that Mr Park suddenly declared that he was inviting them all to spend part of the summer at his place.

This was how, while the fifth-years and seventh-years were busy sitting their OWLs and NEWTs, Jungkook, Taehyung and Jimin, who had already finished their exams, found themselves spending most of their free time getting things organised for their holidays in the Park Mansion. Jimin had invited Hoseok too, of course, and Hoseok had suggested Namjoon, Yoongi, Seokjin and his girlfriend should come too, since they were all family and friends anyway.

Friends was not a word that could apply to the relationship between Taehyung and Jimin yet; maybe because Taehyung was hogging Jungkook, not wanting to let him out of his sight, and Jimin was a bit jealous—or maybe because Jimin, who could be pig-headed at times, still had some difficulties forgetting six years full of mistrust and insults, even after Taehyung's apology and his subsequent forgiveness.

But they were getting there, Jungkook was sure of it. Because Taehyung, once you knew him, was very funny, in a dry sort of way, and sometimes, Jimin couldn't help but giggle when he made a joke, even though he adamantly denied it after.

There was one thing they were strongly united in, though: Appleton-bashing. They hated him even more than Jungkook did, and spent sometimes hours on end vituperating about him, bitching sessions that inevitably ended when Jimin said, in a snide tone, *so you see, being a pureblood wizard isn't a token of quality,* to what Taehyung would inevitably reply, *don't you think I know that now? It's been years, learn to let go, you unadulterated git,* and then Jimin would get mad, and Taehyung would get mad, and they would end up arguing again.

But, Jungkook had very good hopes for the future, because the last time they argued, Taehyung forewent the use of insults, choosing instead to groan and to tell him to *please shut up,* which was some sort of progress.

"I don't get why I'm invited to his place too," Taehyung says, shifting on the grass to cuddle up against Jungkook, head on his shoulder, arm wrapped over his midsection. "I mean, I'm glad I won't have to be separated from you, but Jimin hates me."

"It'll get better," Jungkook says softly. "He already hates you less than he did before."

"I shudder to think what it was like before, then," Taehyung replies in a dry tone.

"I used to hate you too, though, and look at me now," Jungkook points out, kissing Taehyung's hair. "You used to hate me too."

"I told you, I never hated you. I was insanely jealous that I couldn't be better than you, it's different."

"And you're not anymore?"

"No. I don't care about being better than you, because I have you, now. You're mine. Why would I need to be better than you?"

"It's true," Jungkook chuckles. "I am yours. Will you tell me again?"

“I love you,” Taehyung complies immediately.

“I love you too.”

For a while, they don't move, Jungkook's nose buried in Taehyung’s hair, until his mind wanders.

“You know what Hogwarts needs? Or the whole wizarding world, for that matter?”

“What?” Taehyung asks, curious.

“A shrink. I’m guessing Jimin’s dad didn’t have a shrink after the war. A lot of people didn’t. I’m sure it would have helped them.”

“What’s a shrink?”

“It’s a mind healer, of sorts. Someone who talks to you to take the trauma out of your brain and makes you feel better. I think after what happened, we all need a good shrink.”

“Maybe you could ask Jimin’s father to hire one for next year. Someone who would work with Pomfrey in the hospital wing.”

Jungkook straightens up so suddenly that Taehyung falls on the grass.

“Hey! What are you—”

“You’re right! I should ask him if it’s possible! It could be my Muggle Studies project! A muggle psych who’d come, let’s say, once a week, and students could talk to them and, and, at the end of the year, I’d cook up a survey to see if it helped some of them!”

“Alright,” Taehyung replies, still frowning after having been ejected from his comfy place on Jungkook’s shoulder, “but what would the students talk about? You’ve been on the brink of death, but they haven’t.”

“You don’t need to be on the brink of death to talk to a shrink. It could be useful for anyone, like for that trans kid in fifth year, you know the one? Or it could help students manage their stress during exams. And, who knows, maybe if you had someone to talk to when you were a kid, you would have realised earlier that your father was full of shit, and that wanting to follow in his footsteps was a really bad idea.”

“Maybe,” Taehyung admits easily. “Can you lie back down now, so I can get my pillow back?”

Smiling, Jungkook lies down again, and Taehyung doesn’t waste a second snuggling against him like a cat.

“It’s a good idea,” he whispers, his head on Jungkook’s chest, now, his voice vibrating through his ribcage. “It’s a good project. You should do it.”

It is. And the most incredible thing is that Jungkook *can* do it, now. His expiration date stamp has vanished, and he has the rest of his life to do whatever he wants to do. Like bringing psychoanalysis to wizards, or the Internet.

But what he wants to do, most of all, is to stay with Taehyung.

“I love you,” he whispers. “I never want to forget you again.”

“I’ll never let you,” Taehyung replies peacefully, without moving an inch. “Never.”

“Good.”

FIN.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading until the end! I hope you liked this story. I had a blast writing it!

You can find me on Twitter!

Works inspired by this one

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!